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AIM
VOL. 3.

GOOD-NATURE,
AND
OTHER TALES.

GOOD-NATURE

OR,

Sensibility:

AND OTHER TALES.



BY MISS AIMWELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Oh, Nature! wherefore, Nature, are we form'd
One contradiction—the continual sport
Of fighting pow'rs! Oh, wherefore hast thou sown
Such war within us—such unequal conflict
Between slow Reason and impetuous Passion?
THOMSON.

VOL. III.



LONDON:

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1822.

CONTINUATION OF THE TALE OF THE

Heiress of Castlebrook.

WHEN Mrs. Mandeville heard Louisa's relation, she determined that it was still for the best that she should return home; and this she communicated to lord Harcourt, when they met next morning before breakfast. She agreed with him, that as he was under no kind of engagement with lady Augusta Delamore, and as it must be visible to every one that he had no share in her regard, there was no necessity for his communicating to lord Castlebrook his present situation, which he wished himself to be the first to communicate to his father.

They were still happily engaged in conversing on future arrangements, when lady Castlebrook's maid entered, with a request from her mistress to see Miss Mandeville.

Louisa, instantly obeying the summons, found her still in bed, pale and languid. Extending her arms to her young friend, she desired her attendant to withdraw, and wept in unrestrained anguish: when a little recovered, she said—"Louisa, I sent for you to be what you have ever been—the sweet soother of affliction. Mine is a woe that admits not of human aid, but in your presence I find a consolation inexpressible, incomprehensible; hear my words, and repeat them not—understand them not—think of them no more, or regard them as the ravings of madness, and blame me not.—But why dictate to you? you will be all that is patient, indulgent, soft, and tender—would I might say affectionate!"

"Affectionate!" repeated Louisa; "oh,

lady Castlebrook! if you could read my heart——”

“Then do you love me?” exclaimed lady Castlebrook, earnestly regarding her; “yes—yes, you do, as you love all your fellow-creatures. You are a Christian, Louisa! you do not, and you must not, know the pangs of conscience—of remorse! Oh! misery unutterable!”

Louisa indeed believed these words to proceed from alienation of mind, and she shuddered with emotion as she seated herself on the bed.

“Speak to me,” she continued, “dearest Louisa—your very voice is soothing to me. Speak!”

“Will you not see your daughter?” said Louisa; “she surely does not know that you are ill, or she would be here.”

“No, no!” exclaimed lady Castlebrook; “Augusta knows that I am ill, but she is not like you, Louisa. Oh! I had hoped to find in her one who could love me—one whom I could cherish in my inmost

heart ! but she only perpetuates the family to which——Augusta loves me not !”

“ She does indeed love you,” replied Louisa, energetically ; “ hers is not the style of mind for the little minute attentions which might serve to display and give a charm to her affection, but she truly—warmly loves you.”

“ Sweet, angelic comforter !” said lady Castlebrook ; “ not that the affection of Augusta can bestow happiness on me, but to see you so interested for me ! I cannot account for it—it is impossible ! Oh, Louisa ! that you had been such as you are, yet in the lower ranks of life—in a rank which——I know not what I say !”

Louisa believed that the wish was connected with lord Harcourt, beneath whose knowledge the lower ranks would have placed her, and one throb of indignation swelled her heart ; but it was quickly calmed as she looked at lady Castlebrook, and thought that nothing, but what was kind and tender, could come from her.—“ You

are feverish," she said; "pray try to sleep—I will watch over you."

"No," lady Castlebrook mournfully replied, "I do not rave; there is a meaning in what I say, which you do not—cannot know!"

"Is it connected with me?" asked Louisa, starting.

"Would that it were!" she energetically replied.

"Then with lord Harcourt?" repeated Louisa.

"Yes—deeply, dreadfully!—But do not inquire farther, best and dearest Louisa! and never—never repeat what I say. I am feverish, you said—yes, Louisa, on my heart there is a preying, burning, anguished fever. Eighteen years now——What is your age?"

Louisa started at the abrupt manner in which she uttered this question, seemingly so unconnected with the subject, but answered calmly—"Eighteen."

"Oh! would it were indeed possible!—

But you will stay with me—will be my child ?”

Terrified, Louisa wished to quit the room in order to send for a physician, but, fearful of alarming her, she quietly and silently remained, until she was relieved by a summons to breakfast, which lady Castlebrook desired her to obey.

The inquiries of the whole party for the invalid were anxious and affectionate; but Louisa was surprised to find her daughter's anxiety no greater than that of lord Harcourt; in her eyes, her lovely friend seemed a creature to be loved by a child, even as she loved her mother.

Without any tender wish to see and be with her, lady Augusta inquired—“Did Louisa think she could be of any use in the sick room ?”

Desirous to awaken for each other, in the breasts of the mother and daughter, the affection both were so calculated to inspire, she replied in the affirmative; and when she arose from a hasty breakfast, to

return to lady Castlebrook's apartment, lady Augusta accompanied her.

Mrs. Mandeville followed, and drawing Louisa back, she said, with evident emotion—"You mentioned that lady Castlebrook was delirious—on what subject does she speak?"

"She desired me not to tell," replied Louisa.

Mrs. Mandeville would not press her farther, but slowly and thoughtfully she retired, wishing her question could have been freely answered, yet scarcely knowing in what manner.

To her great amazement, Louisa heard lady Castlebrook, with tolerable composure and perfect consistency, speak with lady Augusta, and afterwards the physician. It had not, then, been the delirium of fever; but Louisa's whole soul recoiled from the idea, that a creature so soft—so fascinating—so apparently amiable, should really bear on her conscience the load of guilt of which she had complained.

The bewitching manners—the fond en-

dearment—the pensiveness—the mysterious situation of lady Castlebrook, bound the heart of Louisa in a magic chain. Still, day after day, while debility, or slight degree of fever, and the dreadful state of her nerves, confined her to her chamber, and sometimes to her bed, Louisa, with unremitting tenderness and patience, preserved her station beside her, receiving, at intervals when alone with her, the mysterious confidences which she soon too plainly saw possessed some real meaning.

Naturally good-natured and affectionate, lady Augusta was a frequent visitor in the apartment of her mother, and remained with Louisa, half-admiring, half-despising, and entirely loving the fond, watchful tenderness of which she was herself incapable; her kind feelings would have led her to do any thing she felt beneficial to her mother; but of every thing she justly observed—“Louisa will do it so much better—so much more tenderly, than I could;” and with pain and asto-

nishment Louisa soon perceived that, except when engaged in conversation with her, lady Augusta felt her short stay in her mother's room rather a duty than a pleasure; and that, frequently, on her first appearance, a glance of agony would cross the pale face of lady Castlebrook, which could only be removed by some endearing care on the part of her youthful favourite.

“Do you know, Louisa,” said lady Augusta one day, “I am beginning to think that, with all my boasted talents—all my far-famed beauty, my pride, and my magnificence, I am very inferior to you. I thought it yesterday, when, with tears in her eyes, your mother said you were the comfort of her life, and that, but for you, sorrow had long since laid her in the grave. To be such a blessing to such a woman as Mrs. Mandeville surely raises you very high.”

“High indeed must I be raised, if I rise to lady Augusta,” said Louisa, with a smile.

“But my parents have not deserved

such a child as you are," continued lady Augusta; "my mother and I have had little intercourse through life, and I have been but my father's pride—you your mother's darling: but, in fact, I was not formed for that kind of thing," and a flash of returning haughtiness glanced over her features. "Had we been sisters, Louisa, our characters had been admirably calculated for the happiness of our parents; you their fond nurse in sickness—their pretty, playful darling in gaiety—their soft, pious soother in adversity; I——"

She stopped, and, in the pride of acknowledged talents and superior charms, cast an arch glance on Louisa, who smiled and added—"Their glory in prosperity—their prop and support in the adversity which I could only soothe."

"Their glory! their pride! yes," said lady Augusta, in a melancholy tone, "and am I the more happy?"

Louisa looked up, and saw her fine and haughty countenance sad and downcast, and her sparkling eyes surcharged with

tears.—“ Lady Augusta !” she exclaimed, taking her hand, while her countenance reflected the expression of her friend’s.

“ I am the child of luxury—of splendour, Louisa,” she replied, “ but not of happiness. Ask me no farther—tempt me not, for I am too likely to fall from the duty I owe to my illustrious house ;” and at the magic word her lofty form resumed all its former haughtiness, and she left the room.

Louisa felt heartsick.—“ What indeed is earthly grandeur ?” she thought. “ Poor George might now be happy ; lady Augusta might taste real, solid felicity, but for this vain show—this gaudy bauble, in which she nevertheless exults. In the affections alone is true earthly happiness to be found,” and Louisa smiled as she thought of lord Harcourt and her mother.

At the moment, lady Castlebrook awakened from an uneasy slumber, exclaiming—“ Can a mother forget her sucking child ? oh, yes !—oh, yes ! its feeble cry !—Guilt ! misery !—Harcourt ! Augusta ! my

child! my child!" Then awakening more thoroughly, she opened the curtain, and asked—"Are you alone, my Louisa?"

"I am, madam," she replied, as she tremblingly approached the bed, and arranging the pillows, kissed her, and inquired, was she worse?

"My *heart*!—my *heart*, Louisa! there is the gnawing worm! then, when I think that in a lowly station Augusta might ~~have~~ been more amiable—more really happy, it rends my heart."

"Lady Augusta seems fitted for splendour," said Louisa, timidly.

The eyes of lady Castlebrook sparkled with eager delight, and raising herself on the pillows, she gazed on Louisa.—"Do you really think so? sweetest comforter! perhaps you are right—you are always right.—You really think so?"

"I do," answered Louisa.

"But, oh! the babe born to——perishing in want, or living in infamy—who might have been saved if——Oh! wretched, wretched, guilty mother!" She threw,

the sheet over her face, and groaned aloud.

Louisa shuddered, and after a pause of a few minutes, she said—"If you think, dearest lady Castlebrook, that to confide in me would, in any degree, relieve your mind, believe me, you may trust me."

"I know it," she exclaimed, "Louisa: My dying child I gave to strangers—its dying moments were unsoothed by a mother's care. Oh, Louisa! your likeness to Harcourt! but I know—I can have no doubt—it is absolutely impossible—speak of it no more! if you were indeed mine, I should rejoice in the shame brought on myself by acknowledging the awful deed; but no—such joy is not for me! Oh, no! oh, no! think of it no more!" A violent hysterical attack followed this burst of agony.

Quivering with terror and emotion, Louisa retained presence of mind not to call in any assistance, while she continued in a state in which she would be likely to betray what should only reach the ear of the most faithful friendship.

Immediately on recovering, lady Castlebrook was sensible of this tender precaution, and again and again she solemnly blessed Louisa, praying, that if her unhappy daughter yet lived, she might resemble her.

Exhausted by agitation and terror, Louisa left her early in the day, and, unable to bear the presence of her mother or lord Harcourt while her feelings must be concealed from them, yet unwilling, while her mind was so troubled and confused, to let it work on itself, she walked alone towards the parsonage.

The mystery of lady Castlebrook was far from lightened by her late confidence. Louisa felt perplexed; she knew not how to esteem a woman once capable of such guilt as she had expressed, and to cease to love her was impossible. From some words she had uttered, it appeared that the ever-lamented infant had been exchanged for lady Augusta, and this would explain the connexion of lord Harcourt, as the rightful heir, in the mystery. The motives for such an action were still un-

known, and would probably for ever remain so; but when Louisa thought on the lovely lady Castlebrook she had first loved, softly, though pensively, smiling in the most bewitching endearment, and on the wretched penitent she had just left, she doubted if she were not in a painful dream—again the real misery of the brilliant, envied heiress of Castlebrook!

Louisa would have been ready to turn disgusted from a world of sin and sorrow, had not the dear images of Harcourt and her mother risen before her mind; but these also were soon darkened by a sigh; soon might that noble Harcourt be compelled by filial duty to give up the object of his affections—soon might that tender mother see her darling deserted and unhappy; and why? because she possessed not the wealth and splendour which withheld lady Augusta from what would have been her real felicity.

The dying George Villars next called forth her sighs, as her unsteady steps approached the house of his parents; but

when she entered there, the cheerful smiles of his mother raised a correspondent glow on her countenance.—“ George is better then ?” she exclaimed, in a tone of pleasure, as she met Mrs. Villars.

The mother answered, that he was so much recovered, she hoped he had almost conquered his fatal attachment—that his spirits were revived, his colour returned, and his countenance had resumed its former play.

The account of his father was different ; in the presence of his wife, he forbore to blast her hopes ; but when, her short visit concluded, he accompanied Louisa across the fields leading to Castlebrook, he expressed his own deep, though vague, anxiety for his son ; it was true, his spirits had wonderfully improved—“ But,” said Mr. Villars, “ he has lost the even cheerfulness, once the sunshine of our lives—his countenance wants the serenity that once gave dignity to its fiery ardour—his manner has lost its wakeful attention to passing objects—alas, my sweet friend ! I

fear he rather grasps at renewed hope, than seeks that tree of life which alone could sweeten the waters of affliction—the waters of Marah.” He then earnestly implored her to exert her influence to persuade his infatuated boy to give up a pursuit which must end in misery.

A new and painful source of reflection was now opened to her. Was it possible that lady Augusta secretly encouraged a passion she appeared to despise? It was new to her innocent, confiding heart, to suspect duplicity or art; but in this mysterious mother and daughter every thing was calculated to inspire doubt. Agitated and trembling, she had almost reached the avenue, when her reverie was interrupted by a female figure, which, quick as a flash of light, crossed her path; the height, the majesty of step, all announced lady Augusta; but why should she fly from her? The question was soon answered, when, turning to see what path she had taken, she perceived George Villars standing at a distance, gazing after her.

For some time, Louisa continued to walk near the house, partly in the hope that lady Augusta would join her, and partly in order to consider what was her duty on the occasion. At once she felt it would be wrong to betray to lord Castlebrook a circumstance which would certainly destroy his confidence in his daughter, and which might perhaps be less premeditated than appearances warranted her to conclude. In this indulgent hope however she was mistaken.

Pride, the ruling passion of lady Augusta's breast, had enabled her so far to conquer her growing preference for Villars, as to receive, with pleasure, the noble suitor, whose addresses she had determined to accept, at whatever sacrifice of the inclinations of her heart. His failure in the devoted attention to which Villars had accustomed her, again awakened a sentiment of regret for him ; but this very failure was a fresh incitement to her vanity to succeed in the conquest of Harcourt's hitherto-obdurate heart, and proudly she

smiled in every incident which led to the accomplishment of this design. Every sentiment she most wished to annihilate was, however, revived by the agony of Villars, on the day which first introduced her to Mrs. Mandeville, and when lord Harcourt seemed more in her reach than he had yet been; but, as a duty towards her family, and towards herself, she exerted all her powers to repel them; and anxiously she desired the declaration from lord Harcourt, which would, in a manner, compel their relinquishment; but still she saw him ready to turn from her to Louisa. She could not indeed believe that Louisa was preferred to her, but it was in vain she endeavoured to persuade herself that she was preferred to Louisa; and even if she had been, she found, in lord Harcourt's manner, something which forced her to look back with sorrow to the devoted attachment of George Villars.

Lessened in her own opinion by the mild, unassuming superiority of Louisa, chance and nurse Merton again brought

George to cross her path ; and again she heard herself extolled as the first, the best, as well as fairest, of her sex ; and saw a youth, whose talents and information all must admire, literally sinking into the grave under her disdain. All her sense of duty had hitherto turned on preserving her native dignity—all her desires, on the acquisition of new splendour ; but now, the very pride which inspired these sentiments fixed her heart on one who could not gratify them. She felt, that in uniting herself to Villars, she must for ever relinquish the affection of her hitherto-doting father, and destroy all the hopes her mother had so ardently fixed on seeing her the wife of lord Harcourt.

Her breast tortured by conflicting emotions, she almost envied Louisa's lot ; but at the same time she saw Louisa ready to sacrifice every thing at the shrine of filial duty, and she determined she also would hold to what her principles called on her to do ; and when she left Louisa that morning, she had determined to see Villars

no more. Too proud to seek advice, however, she trusted to her own resolution; and this was easily shaken, when Morton assured her, that with tears he had entreated one moment's interview.

There is something in the tears of a high-spirited man irresistibly touching to the heart of woman; they rarely flow for slight emotions, but seem to express a deep and powerful feeling; and to be the object of this feeling was strongly interesting, not only to the tenderness of lady Augusta, but to her ruling pride; thus at once awakening in his favour the good and evil of her haughty but generous nature. Her family pride called on her to renounce, but her female pride, joined with the better feelings of her heart, in forcing her to encourage him.

Unused to mystery or doubt, Louisa entered the castle pale and dispirited. Lord Harcourt met her, and his anxious tenderness brought a faint smile to her lip; but it was quickly banished by the uncertainty whether she had a right to

confide to him the mysterious appearance of lady Augusta; and though every thought of her own heart would have been open to him, she was silent where another was concerned; the very desire she was conscious of to make him a partaker in every sentiment, leading her to yet more scrupulous guard on herself.

The blush and forced ease of lady Augusta on seeing her, betraying that there was something to be *carried off*, painfully assured Louisa that the meeting had not been one of chance; and this determined her to communicate it to her mother, whose influence with lady Augusta, she hoped, might here be usefully exerted.

To a perfectly innocent and unerring mind, any part or share, even knowledge of wrong in another, is painfully burdensome; and to an indifferent observer, who knew that one of the parties had acted ill, the blushing, restless, silent Louisa would have appeared the criminal, until she had reposed the secret, of which she was the accidental partaker, in the maternal bosom,

where all her pains and pleasures, wants and wishes, rested.

Mrs. Mandeville paused thoughtfully, then said—"You must not remain here longer, my Louisa; you must not, for any object, expose your own character to doubt or blame; and as the friend of George, and her favourite companion, you may be implicated in her imprudence."

"Is not this rather selfish, mamma?" asked Louisa, blushing.

"No, my love," replied her mother; "the strong, the peculiar interest this lovely, though faulty, lady Augusta has excited in my heart, renders it impossible that I should, from selfish motives, act against her interests. I shall speak to her seriously on the subject, and I do not see that our remaining here can be of farther use; but even if it could, it is not selfishness to restrain you from injuring yourself to benefit another."

"But lady Castlebrook—to desert her!" said Louisa.

"You are yourself ill and nervous,

love," her mother answered; "and even if you were to return here, I must have you for a few days in our peaceful home. You have no right, for lady Castlebrook or any other person, to injure my only joy in existence: lord Harcourt too is miserable about you; once he sees you restored to tranquillity and home, he can return to his father; but while you continue in this agitated state, he cannot and will not leave you."

Louisa's feelings led her to remain still to be the soother of her fascinating and unhappy friend, but she felt the justice of her mother's arguments; she saw the anxiety with which she and lord Harcourt observed her own faded appearance, and resolving no longer to indulge her own feelings at the expence of theirs, she promised to return with her mother, the first day lady Castlebrook had made any visible amendment; and in the meantime avoided any knowledge of lady Augusta's actions, either by casualty or confidence.

Mrs. Mandeville, however, seized the

first opportunity of private conversation with lady Augusta, to tell her what Louisa had seen, and to warn her of the misery she was bringing on herself and her unhappy lover.—“If you are still determined to reject him, why encourage a passion already so fatal to his peace? if you will marry him, why conceal it from a father whose whole heart is wrapped up in you—whose grey hairs any failure of confiding affection, on your part, would bring down with sorrow to the grave? The heart may not be in our own power. Your preference for this young man, however destructive to your father’s ambitious views in you, may be forgiven; but this duplicity—this want of confidence, never can. Lady Augusta, whatever be your future intentions, you are *now* acting ill, either by your parents or your lover, and probably by both.”

Lady Augusta burst into tears.—“Mrs. Mandeville,” she said, “had these words come from any other lips, I should have

spurned them as an insult; but you seem to take so lively, so tender an interest in my fate, that, from you, they go to my heart; you will, I am sure, believe me: I have never stooped from the dignity of my house, by one moment thinking of George Villars as the husband of its heir-ess; I but sought to soothe his mind by pitying sympathy; but I shall do so no more. Since Augusta Delamore is not above the censure of the world, she must act as one of its worthless votaries; and remember, should that generous heart burst in the agony of unpitied affliction, he does not die the victim of my cold, heartless pride, but of that world which wanted sufficient candour to hold the dignity of lady Augusta Delamore above suspicion."

"He is now," observed Mrs. Mandeville, "the less to be pitied, as the cause of his late peculiar sufferings is removed; since lord Harcourt——"

"Seeks me not!" interrupted lady Augusta, haughtily; "but, believe me, nei-

ther my pride or my affection have been wounded by Louisa's conquest." She stopped, and blushed to find herself led, by indignant vanity, into the meanness she had often ridiculed in others—of affecting to despise what was beyond her reach; and with a heightened blush, she added—"My affection, indeed, rejoices in seeing my lovely friend sought by a man so worthy of her; and my pride in my noble cousin is gratified by a choice, which proves him as estimable in private as he is glorious in public life."

Mrs. Mandeville's eyes filled with tears of tenderness and "fond regret," as she observed this little turn of feeling and thought.—"How lovely had this creature been, had the sensibility of her nature been expanded by tenderness, instead of being counteracted by pride!"

Lord Harcourt had agreed to leave Castlebrook on the same day with the Mandevilles; rather risking the premature disclosure of his engagement, than any

doubt of his sentiments, which might be entertained, should he continue an inmate of lord Castlebrook's house, one hour after the object which had really formed its attraction; and when Louisa returned to the breakfast-parlour, after her agitated parting with lady Castlebrook, she found him alone, equipped for travelling.—“When shall we next meet,” she asked—“in weal or woe?”

“Soon, my Louisa, and in joy unclouded. My father will come to claim his lovely child—will find in her the perfect representative of all her lamentations in his wife. Oh, my Louisa! when shall I see you clasped in his dear, venerable arms! But, dearest, why those tears?”

“We have been very happy,” said Louisa, on whose mind all the dark hints of lady Castlebrook burst with superstitious force in this hour of separation.

“And shall be more so,” exclaimed lord Harcourt, energetically.

“Is that possible?” she said, trying to smile with cheerful placidity; but finding

the effort ineffectual, she laughed, and added—"You are a most unsentimental lover, or you would rejoice in my tears—precious drops—sweet pledges of attachment, *et cetera!*"

"Precious drops—sweet pledges of attachment!" repeated lord Harcourt, kissing them off, while correspondent drops wet his own manly cheek.

"Soon to meet again, I hope, my little Titania," said lord Castlebrook, as he handed her into the carriage which was to convey her home.

The idea that she was about to disappoint his wishes for his child, thrilled through her heart with such strong emotion, that Louisa would have gladly thrown herself on his neck, there to weep her thanks for his paternal tenderness of manner towards her.

"Adieu, dear Louisa!" said lady Augusta, with unusual softness.

Lord Harcourt was at the moment mounting his horse, and she kindly whis-

pered—"I know your wishes—may they be prosperous!"

The carriage drove off; lord Harcourt turned another way, and was soon out of sight.

Observing something of unusual seriousness hang on the brow of her mother, Louisa attributing it to anxiety on her account, sought, by every playful art of childlike endearment, to dispel it; but every picture her fancy sketched of future happiness could only call forth a degree of tenderness, if possible, exceeding that which usually marked the manner of the mother to her darling child; and in almost continued silence on her part, they reached the cottage.

Here Louisa had a thousand occupations in which she endeavoured to interest her mother; but though Mrs. Mandeville visited with her every apartment and every plant, heard her try if her pianoforte had suffered from her absence, and listened to the thousand questions about her common

occupations, with which she endeavoured to interest her own and her mother's mind, still her thoughts seemed to wander from the garden, the dog, and her favourite old woman, to something sad and solemn.—“I feel as if we had been years away,” observed Louisa, patting Juno's head, as she drew her chair towards the fire after dinner, “and rejoice to meet all my old friends, Juno, and the tables and chairs, as after a long separation; and to-morrow I can go see the Villars's and poor old Molly: old John, I dare say, will be here at daybreak, if he hears his ‘pretty Miss Louisa’ is come home.—But, mamma, why are you so sad? I am really happy to be at home, though my thoughts are a little on the road to London; but he will soon be here. Oh! why will you not smile, mamma, and make it quite home?”

“I am going, my love,” said Mrs. Man-deville, “to undertake a task most painful to us both—to relate to you my own sad story.”

Instantly the gaiety of Louisa's counte-

nance was exchanged for serious tenderness, as, withdrawing the hand which had been playfully entangled in *Juno's* shaggy hair, she softly threw her arms around her mother's neck, and whispered—"Oh! how often have I wished it!"

"So painful has the subject ever been to me," said Mrs. Mandeville, "and so tenderly has my dear one ever avoided to press me on it, that you are, I believe, ignorant of every part of my history. I had scarcely attained my fifteenth year, when, with the interval of but a few months, I saw both my beloved parents consigned to the grave. All my former life cherished by the fondest parental tenderness, at once I found myself an orphan, unknown—unloved by the few relations I possessed. A few days after the last of these tremendous strokes, I received a letter from my uncle, informing me, that, as my nearest relation, his house was my proper residence, and appointing a time when I should be ready to accompany the person he would send to bring me to

London ; the letter ended with explanations of accounts, from which I first learned that I possessed a small portion.

“ The cold and heartless strain from my father’s brother indeed struck a chill to a heart, whose warm affections had hitherto been cherished by a return the most tender.” My parents indeed had many friends, who kindly offered me shelter and protection ; but naturally timid, I felt an irrational terror in my present situation, and I yielded to the peremptory claim of my uncle. How sad—how lost were my feelings when I entered the great city, and saw moving before me the ceaseless multitude, in not one individual of whom the lately-cherished favourite of the village could claim a moment’s interest ! The gay shops—the brilliant equipages—the busy faces of their inhabitants, all awakened a sense of the most desolate wretchedness : nor was it in any degree removed when I entered the dwelling I was hitherto to call my home, where I met a reception equally distant and polite.

“My uncle, a mere man of the world—my aunt, the gay worshipper of pleasure, could not find much interest in soothing affliction they partook not of; but one feeling they seemed to have, in common with those I lamented—it was parental affection; and it was to the kind interference of their only son I owed the little tenderness I received from them. From the first moment of our acquaintance he had shewn me marked and uniform affection; and can you wonder, in the desolate state of my feelings, that I gratefully accepted his attentions, even though the manner of them was disagreeable, and he, in himself, peculiarly unpleasing to me?

“Week after week I found myself unnoticed—unthought of, but by my cousin James. This consciousness is my only excuse for conduct which I have ever looked back to with regret. James left London on necessary business; with him I seemed to lose my only friend, and my expression of this feeling, in answer to his vehement exclamations of sorrow at leav-

ing me, was perhaps too strong. He evidently admired me, and the loss of his attentive care I sensibly felt; but not even he seemed *really* to love me; is it wonderful, then, that my mind was easily susceptible of attachment to the first person who seemed really to feel it for me, when that person possessed all that, had not his love won my heart, had commanded my highest esteem and admiration? I dare not dwell on it, even at this distance of time—it was colonel Mandeville. I loved, in the fullest sense of the word—I loved with mingled tenderness and esteem; and I had known him but a short time when I heard from his lips, what I had often gathered from his manner—that I was beloved. He desired me to demand my uncle's consent to an immediate marriage; and then, in answer to my repeated inquiries, informed me, that his family violently opposed it, partly on account of the smallness of my fortune, and partly on account of a family enmity. This, however, he said, he felt no obstacle; he was, like myself, an or-

phan, therefore would break no filial tie; and for his relations, he said that he painfully felt the unpleasantness to me of entering a family not prepared to welcome me. He then wrote to my uncle a letter, which I was to deliver, having first obtained my promise to see him again in the evening.

“I believe it was fated to me, that from the hour of my parents’ death I should never know unmingled felicity : even the happy moment in which I received the vows of the being dearest to me on earth, was darkened by the consciousness, that for me he was alienating from himself a family, to whom I knew him to be warmly attached.

Not one doubt however of the consent of my uncle and aunt, who had never seemed to find the least enjoyment in my presence, occurred to me, as I entered his study with Mandeville’s letter; but to my equal astonishment and pain, when he had read it over, he expressed his surprise at my having been its bearer, and blamed my coquettish pleasure, as he termed it,

in the addresses of colonel Mandeville, under the tacit engagement which, he said, subsisted between me and his son.

I stood fixed to the spot, from the dreadful feeling of self-condemnation, as I recollected the open pleasure with which I had accepted his very marked attentions, and the expressions of far more than cousin's tenderness in his letters, which had, since my knowledge of Mandeville, been quite unnoticed; and it was long before I could obtain courage to tell his father, that till that moment I had never been even conscious of his regard for me, and that, however I might lament the result of my blindness—however gratefully feel his partiality, that I could never be his; in short, I confessed that my affections were fixed on another.

“They accused me of having, in vanity, used every artifice to win a heart of which I had ever been unworthy, and blamed their own weak indulgence, in not having at once banished me their house, on the

first appearance of this unhappy attachment. My uncle desired me then to quit it before the return of his son, who was expected home that day.

“Horror, at the idea of appearing to colonel Mandeville as a houseless wanderer, so far lowered my pride, as to enable me to entreat shelter for that night. It was granted, and I retired to my apartment; but scarcely had I reached it, when my cousin’s carriage stopped at the door, and I heard his voice speaking in angry tones with his parents: presently he came up stairs, and entreated to see me.

“Conscious of having injured him, though most unintentionally, I appeared before him, trembling like a criminal.—‘Julia!’ he exclaimed, seizing my hands, ‘you are mine—mine, by your own tacit consent—mine, by the wishes of your guardian!’

“‘I assured him, that I had never, for one moment, thought of him as a lover, and repeated what I had said to his father.

My uncle violently forced him from me, and reminded me that I had asked and obtained shelter for but one night.

• “In short, Louisa, thus forsaken by my own family, and rejected by his, I was, in a manner, forced into a clandestine marriage; and trembling, terrified, doubtful whether I was not acting against the dictates of duty, I became the wife of a man whose affection was as honourable as it was dear to me.

“I wrote to my uncle, to implore his forgiveness for the only child of his brother; while Mandeville went to announce our marriage to some of his relations in London: he returned pale and dejected, but his eyes glancing unusual pride.—‘Julia,’ he said, ‘they refuse to receive you—they will not even see my wife; but weep not, dearest,’ he added, the severity of his haughty countenance relaxing into melting tenderness—‘we shall be more happy—more entirely all of this earth to each other.’

“And we were so; Mandeville’s proud heart revolted from the idea of farther

seeking the pardon we were denied, and we agreed in preferring solitude to any society, since we were denied that of our relations. He obtained leave of absence from his regiment, then in London, and for one year we lived, as he said, all in all to each other. It was then, my Louisa, I learned the love which now centres in you: my heart had been divided between my parents, but from that period one single object has possessed it. Oh! I was wrong in saying I never knew unmingled happiness: during that year nothing was wanting—nothing could have been added—but it was short—he was ordered abroad.

“Isolated, lost to all but him, what were my feelings then? they were what they now would be, were I commanded for ever to lose sight of my Louisa. I was in a situation which made travelling impossible for me. I was to lose him. In vain the lion-hearted Mandeville, ever foremost to meet the enemy, implored permission to remain in England for three months longer; he might then have carried with

him his wife and child; but the moment was too critical for an officer so brave, so judicious, and so beloved, to be absent. Oh! how I then lamented the attachment of his soldiers, which I had gloried in as a noble tribute to his worth! but how could I wonder that his presence was necessary to inspire the hearts of others? My own now sunk within me; and now, when he was about to leave me, in a state so needing tenderness, his proud spirit bowed to implore it for me of his relations; but they refused to notice me while he lived, promising, if he fell, I and my infant should be provided for and protected. My own relations were still more inexorable. The friends of my childhood indeed offered me a kind asylum, but I could not quit the spot where I should most readily hear of him, and whence I could most easily follow him.

“He went; the full weight of woe burst at once upon me, and that Mandeville, who had ever been first to encourage his men to action and to glory, now lin-

gered to the last sad moment, to whisper comfort to his wife.

“He had placed me in respectable lodgings, in the care of a kind, attentive woman, with whom he had left a thousand directions respecting me, and a thousand charges to write him daily accounts of me and his child during my confinement.

“Six weeks passed in a degree of happiness; I had two occupations most dear to me—reading and answering his letters, and preparing for our expected treasure.

“Every paper was filled with the glory of the English arms, and with praises of the distinguished bravery of his regiment, and hours of every day I spent in reading them over and over—dear, but fatal pleasure! Every day brought my illness perceptibly more near. My Louisa, I wish to dwell on this time, when I possessed something of Mandeville, but I must go on. With eager delight, about two months after I had lost him, I was reading of a glorious engagement, in which the English arms had been victorious, and my

fond heart glowed with the idea, that to one of those heroes so extolled, I was more dear than all his fame, when, at once, the world became a blank desert before me—he had fallen !”

Mrs. Mandeville paused in strong emotion for several minutes, and then continued—“ In the wildness of despair, I was supported by the idea that an event so horrible could not be real. I rushed from the house, I believe with the intention of obtaining farther information at the war-office ; but I had not proceeded through many streets, when I sunk down, overpowered by the exertion. My senses deserted me, but I suppose some “charitable passenger, seeing my situation, and not knowing my residence, had conveyed me to the lying-in hospital, for there I found myself when returned to consciousness. My orphan child was soon placed in my arms.”

“ And did I then comfort you, mamma ?” asked Louisa.

Mrs. Mandeville clasped her to her

heart.—“ When I gazed on it, and thought of the father who would so tenderly have blessed my child, my senses again forsook me.

“ Another day of unconsciousness had passed, and when I called for my babe, the nurse seemed unwilling to grant my request; but when I wildly demanded it, if it lived, she doubtfully advanced with a sleeping infant in her arms. It was almost dark, and pressing the dear one to my bursting heart, I called for light to gaze again on the features which I thought so strongly resembled those so beloved. The nursetender refused it, under the pretence of its being injurious to my eyes; and that night, my Louisa, while you received sustenance from my bosom—while I soothed your feeble cry, I prayed for strength to struggle with affliction, and to devote my life to you. But morning dawned, and I eagerly availed myself of its light to see my child. Oh ! how little do we know our real happiness ! how dreadful were my feelings at that moment !

but my angel has since practically taught me to see that whatever is, is best. Dear one! I saw not the dark eyes and marked features of Mandeville's child—it was your blue eyes, my Louisa, which then smiled on me, and I was enabled to take to my heart the precious blessing of my after-life."

Louisa clung to her as though she thought that the knowledge that she was the child of another would, by some magic influence, part her from her arms; and long were the struggling tumults of her breast, before she could exclaim—"But am I not still yours, mamma?"

"Dearer—far dearer than ever *his* child now could be," energetically replied Mrs. Mandeville. "The nursetender," she continued, "afterwards related to me the circumstances of the exchange. While I was in a state unable to pay her the necessary attentions, the woman held my infant in her arms, and when called to a lady who wanted to inquire the character of a nurse, she carried it with her. The

lady admired its singular beauty, and when she sent the woman back for further particulars, she begged to have it left in the carriage. When the nurse returned, she raised in her arms an infant wrapped in a magnificent shawl, which she desired her to keep for it as a present from her, and imprinting on its cheek a long and trembling kiss, she covered its head and returned it. The carriage then drove off; and when the nurse discovered the exchange, all clue to it was gone. How often have I been thankful for this, when I have felt the superiority of my darling over every other! You have seemed to me, my child, in every sorrow, as the messenger from Heaven, to remind me, that

“ Behind a frowning Providence,
He hides a smiling face,”

since the greatest blessing of my existence I at first lamented as a misfortune. It has long been concealed, but now that you are about to become a wife, it must be known. • Who your real parents were, I

had no means of discovering, but I have sometimes thought——”

“ I know !—I know !” exclaimed Louisa ; “ it is—it is——Oh, mamma ! was I apparently dying, when I was given to you ?”

“ You were, my love ; that, in part, bound my heart so closely to your infancy.”

“ Then it is lady Castlebrook, and lady Augusta is—oh, mamma !—surely not dearer than your own Louisa ?”

“ Never—no, never !” exclaimed Mrs. Mandeville, trembling with vehement agitation. “ Often have I guessed the truth. It was lady Augusta’s likeness to Mandeville so strongly interested me for her ; but lady Castlebrook appeared so amiable—so incapable of such an act.”

Louisa then repeated all that she had heard from lady Castlebrook, which she had endeavoured to believe merely the ravings of fever, but which now appeared as the confession of a dreadful truth ; and clasped in each other’s arms, Mrs. Mandeville and Louisa collected together all the

circumstances which proved lady Castlebrook and lady Augusta to properly claim the maternal right in one, and the filial tie to the other.—“ And, oh, mamma!” said Louisa, “ surely you will not be so anxious to acknowledge the child of my—of colonel Mandeville, as instantly to yield me up to another. Oh! I have loved her dearly, but still she is not my mother—I mean she is not you, mamma.”

“ Nor, alas! is lady Augusta my Louisa, but she is *his* child. Oh! there is much—much in that feeling. To recover the child of Mandeville—my own!—but, oh! had she been such as my angel—my nursling—no, even his child can never be so dear—Oh, my Louisa! it is a strange mixture of feeling—lady Castlebrook indeed may rejoice!”

Louisa shrieked.—“ And shall I at once be given up—at once lose my guardian guide, and enter on so many trials? Oh, mamma!—mamma!——But no! if you can see the child of Mandeville still bear another name—still unconscious that to

you she owes existence, I may still be yours. She may still hold her splendid station, lady Castlebrook may be spared the sad confession, and all may be tranquil—happy as before.”

“ And Harcourt ?” said Mrs. Mandeville.

“ Louisa, whether the heiress of Castlebrook, or the child of poverty, is equally dear to him ; and I feel pride—delight, in being raised by the man I love—it gives such confidence, though were I heiress of the Indies, I could never doubt his sincerity. But, oh, mamma, when you consider the difference of our education ! I should sink under the splendour lady Augusta so gracefully adorns. Nature intended the exchange. Oh, mamma,” she added, throwing herself on Mrs. Mandeville’s neck, “ can you still be content with your Louisa ?”

“ Can I be content,” repeated Mrs. Mandeville, “ with the greatest treasure Heaven ever bestowed on favoured mor-

tal? But oh, my child, you will one day know a mother's peculiar feelings."

"And I should be just to a mother," said Louisa, her countenance falling as she spoke. "Yes, mamma, take your happy child, and let me follow the path of duty, and return to her who gave me birth. Yet, to acknowledge me, must bring shame on her honoured head. Lord Castlebrook too—my father! Oh, mamma! guide me—guide me!"

"How can I guide," said Mrs. Mandeville, "where I am myself unable to think? My heart beats with an emotion indescribable—unutterable, towards the child who owes her breath to me; she is flesh of my flesh. But, oh! she is not the dear nursling whose flitting life was preserved by my care—who received sustenance from my bosom—who has for eighteen years been the blessing, the joy of my existence. Were the question, whether I should give up my Louisa, or remain unknown to my daughter, my heart would decide; for she was only born

of me; it was you who received and repaid all the tender cares of a mother; yet it would be a hard struggle; but since I may still claim from you——”

“ But, mamma,” interrupted Louisa, her eyes sparkling with renewed delight, “ we have no certainty. Remember, that all lady Castlebrook said may have been only delirium—such likenesses as mine to Harcourt, and lady Augusta’s to my father (oh, let me call him so again!), are frequent, without any relationship. As Harcourt says, resemblance of disposition—indeed, a thousand things, confirm me in the idea that we are mistaken—that I may again be only yours; and if—if at any future period your real daughter should appear, perhaps, mamma, she may be one to whom——though lady Augusta is very amiable.”

Louisa spoke as earnestly, and felt as much desire that her present doubt might be just, as if the discovery of her real parents was to cast her into beggary, instead

of raising her to the wealth and splendour which, could it have been possessed as the child of Mrs. Mandeville, she would have felt fond delight in bestowing on the man who had chosen her portionless and untitled.

“But,” said Mrs. Mandeville, “should this enchanting, unhappy lady Castlebrook, who possessed such power over your feelings, prove to be your mother, would my Louisa willingly leave her unsoothed and desolate as she is? Should we not, before we return to our former tranquillity, endeavour to discover whether our first suspicions were just?”

“You are very willing to part with me,” said Louisa, bursting into tears; but quickly conscious of her own injustice, she added—“Oh, mamma, forgive me, if I am impatient—weak! it is my first trial, and I am not the heroine you fondly imagined me; but though I cannot be worthy of it, I will not disgrace your tender care of me. Yes, mamma, I will consent to make this discovery; and should

lady Castlebrook be my mother, and should lady Augusta be your child, they shall be loved by me as such."

"To-morrow then, my dearest love."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Louisa. "Oh, mamma!"

"Well then, as soon as we are both better able to bear the agitating trial, shew lady Castlebrook the shawl in which you were wrapped; if she recognizes it——"

Mrs. Mandeville paused, and tears, drawn forth by various feelings, flowed from her upraised eyes.

Louisa added—"If she does, my doom is fixed."

For the first time in her life, sleep was banished from the pillow of Louisa by uneasy reflection. At first, it was her earnest desire to delay, to the farthest possible, the eventful explanation; but before morning dawned, she told Mrs. Mandeville, that she believed it would be better, as she had said, to let it take place at once. She had promised to see lady Castlebrook that morning, and it was de-

terminated that she should wear the shawl, under a large wrapping cloak, which she should throw off when alone with her, if she found her sufficiently composed to bear the disclosure.

With a heart sinking with apprehension, yet trembling with a doubtful sense of joy, Mrs. Mandeville arranged the momentous covering.

Louisa dared not form a wish; she would not desire to remain estranged from her parents, and she could not desire to lose the maternal claim to Mrs. Mandeville. Pale, quivering, and perplexed, she threw herself into the arms of Mrs. Mandeville, and exclaimed—"Oh, mamma, inspire me with courage to leave you on such an errand!"

"Honour thy father and thy mother," answered Mrs. Mandeville, solemnly; "but still remember her who has hitherto held a parent's right in thee. I need not, dearest, repeat this charge. No, I shall still be dearer than all with her who with me must ever—Oh, my Louisa, affec-

tion like ours needs not the seal of words, nor the ties of blood."

"But you will promise me, mamma—— No, you need not promise it—that even *his* child shall never be so dear. Oh, mamma, think of the infant hands so often clasped in yours, the little voice that first called you mother, the child who first learned religion from your lips, and your example—whose every thought is but the shade of yours! Oh, mamma, if she is flesh of your flesh, I am soul of your soul: but perhaps it is all a groundless fear," she added; and this idea was indeed necessary to enable her to quit the arms which had so tenderly enfolded her infancy, to seek the parent who had cast her off.

As the carriage, which had been sent to convey her to Castlebrook, rolled forward, she endeavoured to keep her mind, as much as possible, in a state of chaos; but sometimes she thought the road had never appeared so long, and sometimes was ready to chide the postilion for his unusual swiftness.

“ A thousand welcomes, my pretty Louisa,” said lord Castlebrook, as, regardless of all pomp, he advanced to meet her. “ I assure you, lady Castlebrook has thought every moment an hour until your expected visit.”

She felt that the hand which grasped hers, the voice which so affectionately welcomed her, were those of a father, and she could scarcely restrain her first impulse of sinking on her knees to implore the paternal blessing.

“ But why so agitated, my dear little girl?” he added, seriously. “ I never before saw that calm brow discomposed, sweet Louisa. Has any thing troubled you?”

“ No, nothing. May I see lady Castlebrook?” was all Louisa could utter.

He conducted her to the apartment where his lady was anxiously awaiting her arrival, and then left them together.

“ Oh, you are come at last!” she exclaimed, tenderly, as she arose to embrace her.

Louisa's heart throbbed almost to bursting.

"Alas, my love!" said lady Castlebrook, "you are not well. You are too kind; you should not have left me until you were more recovered. Is it not strange, that while I am conscious that I injure you, and while I would give my life to preserve you from all harm, my heart is still open to you—a heart whose fatal secrets blanch your cheek, and shake your frame? You are silent, love. I will seek some other subject; but first speak to me. Let me hear those gentle tones that possess such magic influence. Sweetest, speak!"

Louisa with difficulty suppressed a shriek, as, with a sudden effort, she flung the cloak from her shoulders.

"Louisa," cried lady Castlebrook, "that shawl! Where? When?"

"At my birth," answered Louisa, almost inaudibly.

Lady Castlebrook uttered a faint exclamation of thankfulness, and sunk senseless at the feet of her daughter.

Louisa knelt beside her, and, as her tears bedewed the face of her mother, she forgot all the pangs which had torn her breast, in the idea that in recovering her real parents, she must own other influence than that of Mrs. Mandeville.—“ My mother! my mother!” she cried, in accents of melting tenderness.

Lady Castlebrook soon revived, and finding herself supported in the arms of Louisa, she sunk from them again on the ground, and clasping her hands in supplication, she exclaimed—“ You know not what you do ; you know not that this tenderness is lavished on a wretch who cast you from her. Oh, say that you can forgive me the worst of crimes, before I can tell you that I am—that I am——” Her feeble hands convulsively grasped Louisa’s arm.

“ That you are my mother,” said Louisa. “ Mamma has told me all. Receive, embrace your child !”

“ And can you forgive me ?” asked lady Castlebrook, concealing her face in Louisa’s shawl.

“Forgive you!” repeated she, tenderly ;
 “ what have I to forgive?”

“ True, Louisa,” replied her mother,
 “ my guilt was, under Providence, the
 means of consigning you to better, more
 judicious, but not more tender care than
 your mother’s might have been.”

“ But Providence,” said Louisa, her
 eyes overflowing with tears of grateful
 tenderness towards that friend she might
 no longer call her mother, “ watched over
 both my parents and myself, to preserve
 me from all ill ; and I was given to one
 from whom I have received all that they
 could have wished bestowed on me : then
 cease to look towards the painful past, and
 enjoy the happy present.”

“ And may I then,” said lady Castle-
 brook, “ rejoice in the presence of my injur-
 ed child—Louisa ! *my* Louisa—my child !
 now all my own !” and throwing herself
 wildly into the arms of her daughter, she
 fell into hysterical sobbing.

Louisa sought to tranquillize her by all
 the tender arts she had been used to em-

ploy to soothe and win from sorrowful reflection the mind of Mrs. Mandeville; and at length, terrified lest the sounds should call others to the apartment before any plan had been arranged, she exclaimed—"Lord Castlebrook!—lady Augusta!"

"Lord Castlebrook!" she repeated, mournfully, and starting back; "and must he know all? Oh, he will despise, detest me! But it matters not, if he will receive my child. Oh, Louisa, pity, but do not hate me! To be unworthy of my child! Oh, Louisa!"

"At least," said Louisa, when her caresses had in some degree calmed her, "do not mention it to lord Castlebrook, until——"

"Your father, Louisa," interrupted lady Castlebrook; "still let me hear the dear sound repeated—your father, your mother! Oh, call me so once more, my child, my child!"

"Let not my loved mother," said Louisa, "in the first emotion of her feelings,

betray to my father what we may hereafter wish concealed."

"Concealed! concealed! have I not told you that I should glory in the shame your restoration would bring upon me? Yes, my child, supported by your tenderness, your mother may bear the censure, the scoff of the world; she may be scorned, despised, and she will bear all. But my husband——Oh! oh!"

Louisa remained until her soft endearment had calmed, and her pious and affectionate reasoning had soothed her; and then having prevailed on her to let the discovery continue a secret from lord Castlebrook, until they could farther consult on the means of announcing it, and until she was better able to bear the agitation, she arose to leave her.

"And am I so soon again to lose you?" cried lady Castlebrook, clasping her in her arms. "I shall feel as if it had been but a vision. Oh, better is all the confession can bring on my guilty head, than thus to only half-possess my child."

“ But think,” said Louisa, “ what mamma’s anxiety must be to know the result of my visit.”

“ Yes,” answered lady Castlebrook, “ I should indeed consider the feelings of Mrs. Mandeville, blessed guardian of your infancy! blessed instructor of your youth! Oh, Louisa, can I ever hope that you will love me as you love her?”

“ Yes,” answered Louisa, “ with reverence, with tenderness, with devotion.”

As she passed from the apartment, she was met by lady Augusta, who had not at first known of her arrival; a sensation of tenderness, with which the haughty lady Augusta Delamore had never inspired her, thrilled with strong emotion through Louisa’s breast; she regarded her with new eyes as Augusta Mandeville—the daughter of the venerated man she had hitherto called father, and of the woman she most loved on earth; she raised her eyes to endeavour to trace in her features the resemblance to Mrs. Mandeville she had so often vainly sought in her own.

Lady Augusta looked dejected, though, for the moment, rejoiced at seeing her; and Louisa imagined something of her mother's sweetness in her languid smile. Throwing herself into her arms, she burst into tears.

With affectionate earnestness lady Augusta inquired the cause of her emotion.

"You have not asked for mamma," replied Louisa, unable to give a direct answer, and anxious instantly to awaken for Mrs. Mandeville in the breast of her child all the devoted tenderness she had been accustomed to.

"Believe me, it is not want of affection has withheld me then," said lady Augusta; "but I know she is well, or her sweet physician and comforter would not be here. Were I capable of envy, Louisa, you should be its object, for the possession of such a parent. My mother is——"

"All that should inspire the most warm attachment," interrupted Louisa, unable to bear a breath of censure, either on the

real or supposed mother of lady Augusta.

“ Perhaps you are right,” she replied ; “ perhaps the blame should rather be cast on my rank—my elevated situation, which, till accident introduced me to you, and your charming mother, had placed me almost above the familiar confidence of friendship. In my own rank, I have never yet met a person, unless it be my father, whom I could really love ; and yet, Louisa, you will think me little less than a maniac, when I say it, and yet I would not willingly change places with you, the happiest of human beings.”

“ It is indeed strange,” said Louisa, colouring ; “ and, forgive me, lady Augusta, it is wrong—your mind must be too much bound to this world, when you can prefer its splendour, and its homage, to what you yourself acknowledge heartfelt happiness—to the possession, for instance, of such a parent as mamma. Where the heart is rightly regulated, its pleasures

here are found in the affections—in those ties which will survive mortality, not in the frivolous trifles which perish with this ‘wreath of clay.’ My dear lady Augusta, try to overcome this vain taste, unworthy such a mind as yours. Make yourself such as a parent, tender as mamma, would wish you. You may be all she could desire, and be so. Dearest lady Augusta, forget the narrow prejudices of education, and stand forward your better self. Nature has raised you high above the consideration of your outward advantages; you may stand high above the idle worshippers of worldly honours—you may feel conscious dignity; but, oh, let it be as yourself, not as the heiress of Castlebrook!”

Louisa spoke with an energy and decision unusual to her meek spirit, which generally shrunk abashed under the haughty glance and tone of lady Augusta; but now her heart was interested, and where her affections, or her principles, were called into action, all the minor considerations,

the little outworks of her mind, were forgotten.

“To you,” said lady Augusta, “that I should take pride and pleasure in a situation in which I confess I have little heart-felt enjoyment, must appear a strange paradox; but, my dear Louisa, you have not been educated as I have. You have not been taught from infancy to hold a long race of ancestors as your highest pride; your infant ear did not learn to thrill at their lofty titles, and their deeds of glory; you did not learn to regard your duty towards them as the first of duties. You cannot imagine or enter into my feelings—to you, ‘the magic of a name’ must be unknown, and it has a power to you incomprehensible. My first wish was, in beauty and talents, to resemble Edith of Castlebrook; my second is, that the husband of her descendant may be worthy of the family that unites with his. The feelings which with you have turned to filial piety, with me were taught to fix on the honour of my

illustrious ancestors. Yes, Louisa, with as strict a sense of duty as you obey the wishes of your mother, I adhere to the glory of my noble house." The dejection of her countenance vanished while she spoke on the subject, which ever most deeply interested her; but after a pause she sighed, and continued—"And could you read my heart, Louisa, you would learn to esteem what you now condemn. My principles may, as you say, be ill-directed, but they are pure, steady, and high, as your own."

Louisa felt extreme pain at these words; her unswerving principles forced her to condemn the conduct of those she most wished to approve; and now all the faults with which a false education had sullied the naturally-fine mind of lady Augusta, she felt with double bitterness, from the anxiety she felt for her as the child of Mrs. Mandeville, and the tender interest that anxiety had awakened for her as an individual.

For several days Louisa continued see-

ing her mother, and receiving from her every mark of enthusiastic fondness; but as yet nothing was arranged for their future plans. At times lady Castlebrook determined at once to confess the truth to her lord, but then the apprehension that his strong attachment to lady Augusta would render him unwilling to acknowledge her child, deterred her, and she continued in a state of feverish agitation, every day meeting Louisa with new intentions, and giving them up before they parted.

In the meantime, Mrs. Mandeville, on the same motive, dreading a sudden disclosure, endeavoured to see Augusta, without betraying any remarkable agitation; but this was a kind of pause which could not long continue.

Lord Harcourt, on reaching London, found that his father was absent; so that for a few days his letters to Louisa contained nothing of intelligence; they only lamented the cheerless strain of hers, or chid the reserve of her style, occasioned

by her inability to communicate the feelings which chiefly occupied her mind ; but at length the momentous letter arrived, which informed her that lord Ennerdale had absolutely refused his consent.

Harcourt had determined to remain another week in London, and if he found him still resolute, to return to Castlebrook, and there, under the auspices of his relations, of whose approbation he had not a moment's doubt, to make Louisa his ; he knew that his father's anger chiefly arose from the idea, that but for this attachment, he would have obtained the hand of the heiress of Castlebrook ; and he trusted to her avowed approbation of his choice for the restoration of his favour.

“ Then here, my child,” said Mrs. Mandeville, “ must end our concealment.”

“ No, mamma,” replied Louisa, firmly, though her cheek was pale, and her lip quivered from agitation, “ never shall Harcourt's wife become so without the

full certainty of ‘ approving Heaven.’
Never shall his nuptials bring sorrow on
a mother’s head. No, mamma, they would
be unhallowed, and it shall not be.”

“ And will you give him up, Louisa?
Do you conceive that filial duty can re-
quire the sacrifice of——”

“ No, I trust I need not,” she answered;
“ but certainly I should do so for the pre-
sent, rather than force her to a confession
which might at this moment for ever es-
trange the affections of her husband.
Could the daughter expect wedded hap-
piness, purchased at the destruction of her
mother’s ?”

Another cause, which she did not name,
well aware that Mrs. Mandeville would
not give ear to it, strongly actuated her;
she felt that Augusta’s attachment to her
mother daily increased, but that it was
not yet strong enough to bear the shock
of the explanation; and for this strength
she partly trusted to her farther know-
ledge of Mrs. Mandeville, and partly to
the arguments she hourly poured into her

ear against the haughty principles in which *she had been reared, to which lady Augusta seemed every day to give more attention.* But though fixed and determined in the path of duty, Louisa was no heroine of romance; she did not, for the generous concealment of another's guilt, give herself the appearance of it in the eyes of the man whose heart she well knew would bleed in the idea of her fickleness or uncertainty; she might, to preserve her mother's high place in the opinion of her valued young relation, have endured all the pangs she herself would suffer in his lowered esteem; but she would not inflict on him the anguish of believing her less perfect than he had felt her.

When he came, however, dejected under the disapprobation of a beloved parent, yet almost rejoicing in it as an opportunity of proving to Louisa the force and sincerity of his attachment, her strength was called to a severe trial. How could she at once crush all the hopes which had

supported him under paternal displeasure?

Her agitation and anxiety for his feelings gave a tenderness to her manner, which soothed while it increased his disappointment; as, first receiving his promise not to betray her confidence, she related to him all she knew from Mrs. Mandeville, and all she had gathered from lady Castlebrook, of her motives for the action, dwelling with peculiar emphasis on her penitence, and on all the advantages she had herself derived from the tender care of Mrs. Mandeville, as the best means of reconciling Harcourt to his hitherto favourite relation.

To his representations that this could make no difference while she was yet unacknowledged by her father, and that, as Louisa Mandeville, she might yet be his, she answered that, independent of the, to her, insurmountable objection of separating a son from a parent, who, though now irritated, was devotedly attached to him, she felt, that in such a union she would

be doubly guilty ; her mother must either endure the agony of seeing her despised, clandestinely enter a family where, but for her guilt, she would have been welcomed with transport, or be forced to a premature disclosure, which might destroy her peace, and probably for ever alienate the affections of lady Augusta from Mrs. Mandeville : Mrs. Mandeville too, her far more than mother, should she inflict on her unerring mind a doubt as to the rectitude of her own conduct, by forcing her either to see her hurried into an action so degrading, by difficulties which it was in her power to obviate, or by the instant avowal of the truth, to, perhaps irreparably, destroy the happiness of another, and certainly injure her own ?

“ You are right, my Louisa,” said Harcourt, with tears of tender admiration ; “ I have loved you as the loveliest—I shall venerate you as the most exalted of women ; and, dearest, I have caught some of your heroism. I cannot remain here

without injury to you—I will force myself this moment from you ; and hear my prophecy—our meeting will be a happy one.” He wrung her hand and left her.

The next morning, anxious to strengthen her resolution, by the sight of the beloved object for whom so much had been sacrificed, Louisa’s daily visit to her mother was paid at a much earlier hour than usual. She found her alone, more than common emotion agitating her beautiful features.

When the first transports which always followed Louisa’s entrance were past, she said—“ And now, my child, I must make an inquiry for which I have never yet been able to collect courage. Tell me, Louisa, tell me of Harcourt—of his father. Have you not been rejected as the portionless daughter of an untitled family ?”

“ I have,” she answered, tremulously, “ but Harcourt’s generous heart was unswayed by such considerations ; he was as happy in the love of Louisa Mandeville,

as he can be in that of the heiress of Castlebrook."

"And have you consented, scorned and rejected, to become his wife?" exclaimed lady Castlebrook—"you, on whose bridal pomp all the splendour of rank, of wealth, of illustrious birth, should have smiled, blessing the union which now——Oh, Louisa, to what have I exposed you! Oh, let me go this moment—let me tell him that——"

Louisa interrupted her.—"I have not accepted Harcourt on such terms; he felt and approved my motives, for to him I have confided all."

"Already!" cried lady Castlebrook; "and does the beloved of my child already detest her guilty mother?"

Louisa calmed her with assurances of his perfect forgiveness.

"Generous children!" she exclaimed, "how have I deserved such kindness! Oh, my Louisa, because you have been rescued from the lion's den, is she who

cast you there less guilty? And you forgive me, even while unconscious of the motives which may, in some degree, exculpate me; perhaps believing that the vain pride of bringing heirs to this noble house had actuated me:—but no—for five years I had lived tortured by the loss of the new-found blessing; four lovely infants were born to me, and all in the same manner perished, before I had one month been blessed with them. My heart clung to the idea of a child, with a kind of wild tenderness, of which those who have not experienced similar misfortunes cannot form a conception. My heart was just taught maternal love, when its precious object was removed. You were born at a time when your father was absent for several days; I gazed on you—I watched you with feverish hope; my arms never relinquished you—my eyes never closed in sleep, while I could gaze on you with one ray of hope for future happiness; but I saw your little life sinking away, as I had seen that of my other darlings. I

believe my brain became confused by the agony of my heart. To see you expire, to see you borne from my bosom to the grave, was more than I could bear. At once the tremendous idea took possession of my mind, of obtaining a living child, even at the loss of your remaining hours; in vain were all the expostulations of Morton, to whom I instantly communicated my plan; with the fierce impatience of a maniac, I persisted in it. I believe she feared for my senses. My own carriage left me at a shop, where I was not known, whence we procured a hired coach, which took us to the Lying-in Hospital. My heart swelled over my child with a passionate fondness, which had almost determined me to retract, and for the melancholy indulgence of receiving your last sigh, to give up every hope for the future; but the nurse appeared, carrying an infant of unequalled beauty.

“ My dreadful plan was then almost relinquished, and I merely asked for it for the pleasure of caressing it; but while

the woman was gone into the house to make some inquiries which Morton directed, its smile, the healthful movement of its limbs, again fixed my resolution*. I remember wrapping you in that shawl, but no more; my reason left me, and I was carried home senseless. For several months I continued in that state of mental derangement which attends the highest degree of nervous fever. Every pang that rent my bosom for my lost babe, echoed on my heart with redoubled force for the mother I had deprived of hers.

“ Morton too, in pity for my self-accusations, as the murderer of my child, assured me that she doubted not its life might be preserved by the change, as the heated atmosphere in which, on account of their natural delicacy, I had persisted in keeping my children, might have had an injurious effect.

“ To what worse than death then had I exposed you! Perhaps to infamy — to

This fact occurred at a lying-in hospital not many years since; the exchange was also of female children.

eternal destruction ! Oh, Louisa, I have mingled in society, I have conversed, I have seemed cheerful, but still the idea that perhaps my child lived — lived to misery, has haunted me like a phantom. Every shivering mendicant I saw filled me with horror, that such might be the rightful heiress of Castlebrook. How much of the charity, for which I have blushed to receive undue praises, has flowed from this dreadful source ! At other moments I calmed myself with the idea that her little breath seemed just escaping when I parted from her, and tranquillized with regarding her as in her quiet grave, my mind resumed a degree of composure, which lasted until some interesting youthful face again awakened it to agony.

“ When I recovered, as much as I ever recovered, from my first derangement, I found that my lord had contracted the most fond parental affection for his beautiful little heiress ; she became his idol, and I would not deprive him of a happiness I so well knew how to value. *She was a

lovely child, and among my other tortures, I have frequently reproached myself for my failure in the duty I had voluntarily contracted towards her; I attended indeed to her instruction, but I could not feel towards her the meltings of a mother's tenderness, and consequently could not awaken in her breast the softness of nature, which expands only in domestic endearment, and of which she was not deficient, if it had been properly cherished.

“ The fondness of lord Castlebrook was too much mingled with pride in her beauty and talents, as his heiress, to counteract this evil; and I am painfully conscious that she is less happy and less amiable than she might have been.

“ When I saw you, my Louisa, I at once felt you a person I could really love. Occasional glances of likeness to your father and my former self, with your singular resemblance to my favourite Harcourt, fixed my preference; but your mother's situation in life for some time prevented the most distant suspicion of the truth;

and always dreading the subject, I never noticed to my lord your extraordinary resemblance to our family, the want of which he had frequently lamented in Augusta.

“As I became more intimate with you, my wish that such might be my child, if yet she lived, strengthened into a hope; and I often wished, yet dreaded, to inquire into the history of Mrs. Mandeville’s life, to discover if she had reason to suspect an exchange of her child for that of its nurse, as by this means I conceived a possibility of my daughter having been consigned to her. However, this seemed an improbability so wild, that I dared not found any serious hope on it, and heard Harcourt’s declaration of attachment to you with all the pangs of conscience which the failure of his engagement with Augusta was calculated to inflict; for him I had felt something more nearly resembling maternal tenderness than I had ever felt for her; and my con-

science found a relief for the wrong I had done him, by the intervention of a surreptitious heir, in the hope of restoring to him his rights with her in marriage.

“Oh, my Louisa! into how much guilt does one crime lead us! My reason told me that they were utterly unsuited to each other; but I shut my eyes to the truth which glared in them; and had you not interposed, like an angel of light, to disperse the clouds your mother’s guilt had caused, Augusta’s proud spirit had now been indignantly struggling against a control her heart acknowledged not, and Harcourt had been lost to the enjoyments of domestic life he can so well appreciate; but happy chance brought my outcast child to my arms, and Harcourt to the felicity he alone is worthy of.”

Louisa endeavoured to direct her mother’s gratitude to a higher power than that of “chance,” and while she yet spoke, the earnestness of her feelings sparkling in her eloquent countenance, lord Castlebrook entered the room.

Coldly receiving, and instantly dropping her offered hand, he presented her with a letter.—“As this chiefly relates to you, Miss Mandeville,” he said, “I request you to peruse it at once, to spare me the pain of repeating its contents, and to enable you to form your own judgment of them.”

Louisa read it. It was from lord Ennerdale, informing him that his son had confessed to him an attachment to a person in the neighbourhood of Castlebrook, and entreating his interference with the young woman, since with Harcourt it was vain, to save him from a disgraceful marriage. It concluded thus—“I am well aware, that his having turned his thoughts towards such an object must for ever preclude the possibility of the alliance I so ardently desired for him; but though now unworthy of lady Augusta Delamore, Harcourt is a noble youth—an honour to his race; and I am convinced your lordship will use your utmost influence to save him from the only disgrace he can ever incur. He says this person’s

birth is highly respectable, her character spotless and exemplary, her information extensive, her principles upright and honourable, and that great beauty is her least charm—that she is generous and disinterested. Could I believe all this, I could overlook her want of fortune and title, in consideration of his romantic attachment; but how could she, without the deepest art, have lured his affection from the peerless lady Augusta Delamore, of whose charms and merit he was at first duly sensible?”

“Am I right, Miss Mandeville,” said lord Castlebrook, when she had silently returned the letter, “in the conjecture that you are the lady here alluded to—this formidable rival of lady Augusta Delamore?”

“I am, my lord,” answered Louisa, with modest firmness.

“Then here, I believe,” he continued, looking at the letter, “lord Ennerdale’s objections end; Miss Mandeville’s birth is highly respectable, her information is ex-

tensive, her great beauty is her least charm ; she appears generous and disinterested, and her principles and character have been upright and spotless."

" Have been, my lord !" proudly repeated Louisa.

" Yes, madam," he replied ; " I have always believed it. What the powers were which induced lord Harcourt to falsify his engagement with lady Augusta Delamore you are the best judge."

" The powers of worth, of attraction, of every endearing feminine virtue," cried lady Castlebrook.

Her husband looked at her—" I conceive, Theodosia," he said, " that Miss Mandeville's own reason will judge her more correctly than her enthusiastic friend. Speak, Miss Mandeville."

Louisa's heart swelled at interrogations thus proudly made ; but she recollected that a father uttered them, and she mildly answered—" I know not precisely what ; I only know it was not artifice."

" I believe it, Louisa," said lord Castle-

brook; but quickly catching the half-uttered words, he continued—"I have no right to demand a confidence you are unwilling to bestow; probably, indeed from my knowledge of your character, I am very sure you have not acted incorrectly; but, at the same time, I conceive it due to the honour of my house, to Augusta Delamore, my daughter, and the heiress of Castlebrook, that the person who has possessed this magic, nameless power of captivation—this superiority of attraction, should not——"

Lady Castlebrook fell at his feet, and just uttering the words—"You know not what you do—a father!" she sunk senseless on the floor.

"Leave her, leave her, my lord, I implore you!" exclaimed Louisa. "When she is recovered, in the drawing-room I will answer all—every thing you can ask."

"I obey you, madam," said lord Castlebrook, with chill politeness, quitting the apartment.

Louisa's cares and caresses had their usual power over lady Castlebrook, who soon revived.—“And now I must leave you,” she said, when she had placed her on the couch. “I promised to meet lord Castlebrook. I must only delay to implore you not to betray our secret; for my sake, my beloved mother, for the sake of your child, do not force me on lord Castlebrook, at a moment when he is so violently irritated against me. Promise me.”

“I do promise whatever you desire,” answered lady Castlebrook, clasping her in a long embrace.

Louisa hastily returned it, and followed her father.

“I believe I was saying, Miss Mandeville, at the moment we were interrupted,” he said, “that though my high esteem and admiration for your character may in no degree be lessened, I feel it due to Augusta Delamore, that the person to whom her avowed suitor has attached himself should no longer continue the favourite

intimate of her father's house. I believe we are both desirous that this agitating interview should conclude. Your carriage, madam, waits."

Louisa Delamore's pride rose in blushes even to her throbbing temples; but the chill of wounded filial affection instantly condensed the indignant blood, and pale as marble she prepared to obey him.

He led her in silence to the hall; there he paused—"My dear young friend," he kindly said, "you could not have a stronger proof of my regard, than the painful emotion I now feel, in doing what I conceive for the honour of Augusta, because it gives you uneasiness, and deprives us of the free enjoyment of your society. Sweet girl, may I—dare I hope that you feel my motives, and will still consider me your friend?"

"Would I might ever do so!" exclaimed Louisa, fervently grasping both his hands.

An action so vehement, from one so even, so tranquil, surprised him, but he

affectionately returned the pressure, and replied—"Ever, always do; next to my own daughter, dear girl, you are the child of my heart."

Louisa blushed high as she asked—"And may I, sir, soon again meet my beloved lady Castlebrook?"

"Forgive me, Louisa," he replied, "if I say that Augusta is injured by the avowed preference of her own mother for a stranger."

"Will you despise me, my lord," said Louisa, with downcast eyes, and glowing cheeks, "if I venture another request?—May lady Augusta see mamma?"

"As lady Augusta desires," he answered. "My sweet Louisa, such a child as you are, of such a parent as yours, can forgive the perhaps-too-great pride and tenderness of a father's heart."

Louisa entered the carriage, and drove off.

Lord Castlebrook instantly wrote and dispatched a letter to lord Ennerdale, expressing his high opinion of the character

of Miss Mandeville, but at the same time informing him, that under present circumstances he had felt it necessary to deprive his family of the pleasure they found in her society, by communicating to her the contents of his letter, and dispensing with her presence at Castlebrook.

He had indeed done violence to his feelings, in pursuing the conduct which his pride in his lovely heiress had prompted. The winning sweetness, the artless simplicity, of Louisa's appearance and character, had the more interested him, as he had always regarded her as one who could hold no competition with lady Augusta; but now he felt this negative charm was not the only one she possessed; the innocent countenance of Louisa, in which a pride he admired had forcibly struggled with a sorrow which endeared her, still rested on his mind. He could not return to his lady, whose feelings he knew had been deeply wounded; he was restless and uneasy.—“Dear innocent child,” he thought, “how could I for one mo-

ment doubt her upright candour! how could I so cruelly accuse her of deception, and dim her pretty laughing eyes with tears! Surely this was not necessary to the pride of my daughter! To-morrow I will acknowledge to her my injustice, and my sorrow for it; but still I must force myself to continue this cruel estrangement, sad as it is, both to myself and Theodosia. In this, and in my letter to lord Ennerdale, I have acted correctly, since I have acted for the honour of Augusta."

Such were his feelings when lady Augusta entered; she inquired for Louisa, and hearing she was gone, expressed her hope that she should see her next day.

"No, Augusta," replied her father. "Consistently with the pride of a Delamore, you can never again be in intimacy with the person who has ensnared the affections of the man actually received in this castle as the suitor of its heiress. Lord Harcourt is the accepted lover of Miss Mandeville."

“ I have long perceived it,” said lady Augusta; “ but, my dear father, independent of my strong attachment to Louisa, and her inestimable mother, my pride calls on me to request that, if she can be recalled, her intimacy here may never be diminished by such a consideration. Perhaps,” she added, smiling, “ our feudal ancestors might have declared enmity against the treacherous ally who had drawn away for his heiress the chevalier of ours; but in more civilized times, I should conceive myself degraded by a contest in which Edith of Castlebrook might have gloried. Delamore pride perhaps calls for war, but female dignity is best supported by pacific measures.”

Lord Castlebrook was even more than ordinarily inclined to admire and coincide in her opinion; he went to his almost-distracted wife, and desired her to write a letter, which he would convey, entreating the return of their sweet young friend, with her mother.

Her gratitude and joy equalled the ex-

cess of her affliction ; and never had she felt such ardent affection for her lord, or such tenderness for Augusta, as when she saw them set out the next day, to restore to her arms the precious child in whose presence she found a recompence for all her former sufferings ; yet she longed for the time when the parent who now sought her as a friend, should embrace her as his child, and learn to fix his pride on her as his heiress.

Lord Castlebrook was not without apprehension that the pride of Louisa's gentle nature would lead her to reject his first overtures of reconciliation ; and now the ready delight with which she accepted his invitation, he received with heartfelt pleasure, as a proof of the real affection which had conquered the pride naturally awakened by the circumstances ; and that night, at Castlebrook, Mrs. Mandeville and Louisa fondly congratulated each other on the quick return of his affection, and on the daily increase of Augusta's respectful tenderness.

Lady Castlebrook now began to feel the necessity of farther establishing the affection of her father, before she suffered the eclairsissement to take place; and now that her mind was comparatively at ease about her daughter, the affection she naturally entertained for the child reared under her care, and her fervent gratitude to Mrs. Mandeville for her maternal love of her deserted infant, made her anxious in her arrangements to consider with Louisa their advantage.

Two days had passed at the castle, in apparently-tranquil happiness on all parts. Lady Augusta indeed had greatly lost the brilliant vivacity of her natural character; and frequently the watchful eye of Mrs. Mandeville observed the hasty colour rise and fall on her cheek, and a struggling sigh agitate her breast, when she usually retired, as if to conceal the momentary emotion; her mother knew its cause, and with thankfulness she rejoiced in the attachment which she would have herself, from her high opinion of Villars, wished

to encourage, and which might help to reconcile her daughter to the loss of the lofty splendour she had been reared in, as freeing her from the trammels which now seemed to call on her to renounce the man she loved. Often she felt doubtful whether in suffering the mental conflict to continue, she was not rather actuated by the selfish pleasure of winning her affection, before she forcibly claimed it with maternal authority, and by the weak desire she felt of still even outwardly retaining all her rights in Louisa, than by care for the real interests of either of her children; yet she remembered how easily his preferable love of Augusta had turned the heart of lord Castlebrook against Louisa; she remembered that Augusta avowedly preferred her rank, with all its bonds and restraints, to a lower, in which the affections of her heart might fully expand, and she resolved to remain in silence, endeavouring, with Louisa, to turn her mind into a channel better suited to

her real situation in life, and better calculated for her real happiness.

Mrs. Mandeville had believed that she loved Louisa as much as it was possible to love; but now, when she saw the lovely playful child the mild instructress of her faulty daughter, the pious guide of a mother's steps, sacrificing every selfish feeling to gratify those of her three parents, yet retaining all the artless simplicity, the childlike endearment of her character, she found that her former affection was capable of increase; at least that it was capable of taking a stronger, more respectful form. All the energies of her mind awakened, its too-great timidity thrown off by the constant play of her feelings, Louisa appeared only now to be known; her soft tenderness soothing every returning pang of her real mother; her sound sense and correct judgment clearing from the mind of Mrs. Mandeville every doubt as to her line of conduct; her interesting and rational conversation

leading, but never forcing the thoughts of Augusta from painful and uncommunicated reflections—her playful gaiety and lively attention, as a listener, banishing from the brow of lord Castlebrook the gloom with which the visible dejection of lady Augusta frequently clouded it—her talents—her playfulness—her information, were ever ready to amuse or interest the mind.* The smallest power she possessed, she knew to turn, when occasion called for it, to real use; and though indifferent to trifles, she never regarded as such any thing which could, in the lowest degree, contribute to the comfort, or prevent the slightest uneasiness, of any individual. Some might ridicule as frivolous, but all must themselves wish to experience, the delicacy of kindness, with which, in the most trifling instances, Louisa sought to spare the future feelings of her friend; the thought she bestowed, the thousand little arts she used, even to accustom her ear to the omission of her title, by calling her, as

in fond familiarity, by her Christian name alone. Many will do a kind action, give a pleasurable sensation, for which they may receive gratitude or liking; but there are comparatively few who have the negative, and perhaps superior good-nature, of unobservedly sparing the feelings from pain.

It was on the third evening of their visit at Castlebrook, while the whole party, except lady Augusta, were assembled before dinner, that Morton appeared at the door, requesting to see Miss Mandeville. She told her that lady Augusta was very ill, and desired to see her.

“ Ill, Morton !” repeated Louisa, who had parted from her in perfect health but an hour before—“ in what manner ?”

With the spirit of an abigail, Mrs. Morton prepared a defence for her young mistress, though aware that the truth would appear, the moment they reached the apartment they were approaching; but finding the ground of an accidental walk, on a gloomy December evening, ra-

ther untenable, she shook her head in silence.

Louisa found her seated by a large fire, just disencumbered of her dripping garments, while her maid knelt at her feet, rubbing them with spirits; her long dark hair hung wet around her—she trembled violently, partly from the chill she had received, and partly from the strong emotion which was visible on her countenance. —“ My dear Louisa,” she said, “ Morton insisted on calling you—I am very ill, and you can do something for me without telling—alarming my mother. Margaret,” she added, addressing her maid, “ Morton can take your place.” She coloured high, as the woman arose to obey her; the idea of making a confidant of her attendant, in a circumstance concealed from her parents, was insupportable to her; yet she could not suffer it to reach their ears through such a channel, and grasping Louisa’s hand, she exclaimed—“ My father!”

Louisa caught her meaning, and said—

“Margaret, it is needless to alarm lord and lady Castlebrook, by informing them of your lady’s illness, nor do not mention it in the servants’ hall.”

She left the room, and guessing lady Augusta’s unwillingness to communicate the too-evident cause of the lonely walk, in which the shower had surprised her, Louisa aided and directed Morton’s cares without making any inquiry. Having placed her in bed, she sent Morton for some whey.

Lady Augusta burst into tears, and kissing the hand which held hers, she said—“Dearest Louisa, I am not insensible of your tender kindness; in your silence and in your countenance I see that you suspect the truth; but tenderly guarding from pain the pride you condemn, you forbear to acknowledge your consciousness, that Augusta Delamore has been guilty of an action which she blushes to confess to the menials of her father—I am disgraced—lost!—my proud father glorying in *my* spotless, blameless, lofty honour,

more than in all the splendour he so highly values!—Oh, Louisa! I, who so lately thought myself dishonoured by the idea that I could become the wife of George Villars, for whom I have now stolen, like a criminal, from the castle of my forefathers, to enjoy clandestinely the homage which I persuaded even myself to believe that I despised!" The vehement agitation of her feelings, together with the chill of the violent shower which had overtaken her while distant from the house, had raised a high degree of fever.

This was not a moment for argument or advice; Louisa tenderly soothed her feelings, and at length, by affectionate persuasions, prevailed on her to allow her to mention her illness to Mrs. Mandeville, whose medical skill she felt desirous to call in, as well as to take advantage of this moment of suffering to strengthen her filial affection.

In crossing the hall for this purpose, her passage was abruptly stopped by George Villars, who, braving every risk, had pla-

ced himself there, to hear of the safety of Augusta. Circumstances were greatly changed since that name had last been mentioned between them.

Louisa now felt that the encouragement of this attachment, already so fully returned, was the best means of reconciling lady Augusta to the change in her situation, which must shortly be known to her, and she minutely answered all his inquiries, promising fresh information early the following morning. The consciousness of the power he now possessed over the happiness of Mrs. Mandeville, through her daughter, gave an unusual degree of affection to her manner towards him, and gave added force to the earnestness of her entreaties, that he would for the present withdraw.

A perplexity she had not at first considered, checked her steps as she approached the saloon: her apprehensions for Augusta's health made her eager to call in the aid of Mrs. Mandeville, and she only now recollected that it was impossible to inform

her of her illness, without also informing lord and lady Castlebrook, who were in the same room. She knew that lord Castlebrook's sense of female decorum would instantly take the alarm, and that his first inquiries would be on the cause of her being out after sunset alone, and far from the castle; and the idea of accounting for it falsely never occurred to her. The perplexity however had been provided for by Morton, who met her with information, that, aware it must sooner or later come to the knowledge of her lord, she had told him that her young lady had been caught in a snow-shower in returning from the cottage of a poor tenant, where she had forborne to ask the company of Miss Mandeville, the children being ill of the measles; her lord, she said, seemed displeased enough at this, though he did not like to blame lady Augusta before a servant.—“And so you may consider, Miss Mandeville,” she added, “what a way he would be in if he knew the truth.”

Louisa blushed, and felt very guilty in se-

conding a falsehood ; but she instantly determined she was right to do so, and not expose Augusta, in her present state of nerves, to the rage of her supposed father, and consequent declaration of her real birth.

She found him walking thro' the apartment with a clouded brow, muttering, at intervals—" Very extraordinary !—five o'clock !—a December evening ! Augusta was always charitable, but this is a little too condescending—Augusta, who always felt, with such strict decorum, what she owed her sex, her character, and station !" but when Louisa appeared, anxiety for her health overcame every sentiment of anger, and he advanced to hear her account.

Fearful of really alarming him, she forbore to mention her own apprehensions ; without corroborating, she avoided contradicting Morton's tale ; and as soon as she could escape from his minute inquiries, she retired with Mrs. Mandeville and lady Castlebrook to the chamber of Augusta ; lord Castlebrook, in the mean time, dis-

patching a servant for the nearest medical assistance.

•Before morning, the fever had risen to delirium, and apprehensions were entertained for her safety. For three days, with ceaseless care, Louisa, Mrs. Mandeville, and lady Castlebrook, watched her feverish pillow; and still, whenever in intervals of reason she found herself alone with Louisa, she implored her to soothe the anxiety she knew that Villars endured.

On the fourth day there was a visible amendment, but the fever had left her alarmingly weak, and still unable to rise from her bed.

Louisa had now the difficult task of calming the spirits of lord Castlebrook, which had suffered much from the danger of his beloved Augusta, and still more by the mystery which had caused it. So carefully had she concealed her sentiments from every eye, that while he frequently expressed to his attentive young friend his suspicions that Morton's account of

her walk that evening had been false, he never once touched on its real cause. But, in the mean time, the letter so hastily dispatched to lord Ennerdale remained uncontradicted, and it is not unnatural, that in the agitation he had lately undergone, it had been forgotten that the sweet soother of that agitation still continued, in the eyes of his noble relative, an exile from the castle, of which she was, in fact, the only comforter. He knew her more than restored to her former place, and forgot that it was not equally known to lord Ennerdale.

The letter however had reached him ; the wily enchantress was there acknowledged to be worthy and respectable ; and lord Ennerdale yielded to the importunities of his son, to travel to Castlebrook (where he had a constant invitation, though for eight years his ill-health and various occupations had prevented his accepting it), and there judge himself of Miss Mandeville. Well knowing the haughty disposition of lord Castlebrook, and not aware of the peculiar

power Louisa possessed over his feelings, he had no expectation of there being able to become acquainted with her, but he hoped to learn more of her character than he could do by letter.

In order to leave an introduction to chance, and the tender care of lady Augusta and her mother, Harcourt forbore to accompany him, and the letter announcing his lordship's intended visit had been mislaid, in the confusion that pervaded the castle during Augusta's dangerous illness. A three days' journey brought him to the magnificent abode of Castlebrook; and alighting there, a servant shewed him into the library, while he went to inform his lady, his lord being out, of lord Ennerdale's arrival.

A young lady stood at a distance looking at a book she had just taken down, and was not, for a moment, aware of his entrance; she then advanced, with timid, though courteous politeness, but perceiving him chilled by the intense cold of the weather, the reserve of her manner gave

place to the frankness of good-natured solicitude.

Louisa's manner to strangers possessed nothing of magic fascination; a pretty, pleasing girl was the highest praise usually allotted her on her first address; but where the situation of a stranger was in any respect distressing, the natural and universal kindness of her heart gave her something of the charm she possessed in the eyes of those she loved; the unaffected cordiality of her words—the simplicity with which they were uttered—the open, candid truth and goodness of her countenance, peculiarly delighted lord Ennerdale, who, mistaking her for the brilliant and admired heiress of Castlebrook, felt something of bewitching sweetness in the almost childlike innocence of her appearance. When she had provided for his accommodation, and placed him near the stove, she proposed going herself to call lady Castlebrook—"But first," she said, blushing, "I must inquire who I am to announce."

"I should sooner," he replied, "have

introduced lord Ennerdale to his lovely cousin."

Louisa started; the cheerful frankness of her countenance disappeared, and with burning blushes she withdrew the hand he had taken.—“ I shall inform her, my lord,” she faintly answered, leaving the room.

“ Wily indeed,” thought lord Ennerdale, “ must be this artful beauty, who has persuaded Harcourt to believe this sweet enchantress a haughty woman of the world ! This seems to be just the character his better reason would have chosen—so simple—so unsophisticated, yet such an appearance of sense and discernment—a smile of such playful, childlike innocence—a brow of such deep and solid thought—just the kind, cordial sweetness of his mother’s look and manner ! Oh, Harcourt ! born of such a mother, how could the mere glare of beauty or of flattery have higher charms for you, than such a mind as speaks in every look and tone of your lovely cousin ? and she might have been his ! that I read in

the indignant blush which rose on my name." Such were his reflections when lady Castlebrook entered, and with the usual openness of his temper, they were instantly communicated to her.

Lady Castlebrook was aware that it was Louisa, not Augusta, who had excited his admiration, and with maternal pride she heard his praises of her daughter without informing him of his mistake.

"My dear lady Castlebrook," said the good old man, tears rising to his eyes, "painful indeed must be my feelings, to see my boy, whose clear, unbiassed reason I felt even more noble than all his military glory; thus charmed from every sense of what is good and lovely by the arts of syren beauty; and I must feel for myself too. What a blessing to my old age would have been a child so gentle, kind, affectionate, as that lovely girl! And now I must see him, wretched as he is, all his cheerful spirits gone, or receive to my house one who would despise the place I should wish to offer Harcourt's wife—my

. heart! But you have seen her, lady Castlebrook—what is her appearance—what is her disposition?”

“Her disposition,” answered lady Castlebrook, smiling, “is all her appearance indicates, and you can judge of her appearance—Louisa is the person you have seen. Augusta is confined to her bed.”

“I should have known it!” he exclaimed—“I should have known Harcourt too well, ever to doubt the excellence of his judgment! This hour I will write to my noble boy; but first, madam, will you beg of her to see me, that I may ask her pardon, and tell her, that want of fortune is no obstacle with her? Yet,” he added, “I should have been happier if she had been a daughter of Castlebrook: however, tho’ she is not, she is a lovely creature.”

Lady Castlebrook paused doubtfully—should she at once inform him that Louisa and the heiress of Castlebrook were one, or persevere in her original plan of waiting till the feelings of her lord were more conciliated? However, a moment’s reflection

decided her on the latter.—“ I think,” she said, “ you will find Louisa, in every respect, better suited to your noble Harcourt. • If Augusta had accepted him,” she added, recollecting that her words were calculated to give an injurious opinion of her, “ it would have been rather in compliance with the wishes of her family, than from any decided preference—but I shall seek Louisa,” and she left the room.

She found her in Augusta’s room with Mrs. Mandeville, to whose tenderness she had instantly flown on escaping from lord Ennerdale. Pale and agitated, she rested in her arms, hiding her face on the bosom which had cradled her infancy.

Mrs. Mandeville gazed on her in silence; the most affectionate anxiety was expressed in the countenance of Augusta, who, raising herself as lady Castlebrook entered, earnestly inquired what lord Ennerdale had said.

“ He is delighted with Louisa,” answered lady Castlebrook, kissing Augusta with a degree of fondness she had never felt for

her before ; and then advancing, she drew Louisa from Mrs. Mandeville's arms to her own, while she told her that he desired to see her, "and honours the choice of his son," she added ; "portionless as you are, my child, he now accepts you with delight."

"Is there not a joy in poverty?" said Louisa, kissing off the tear which stole down her mother's blushing cheek.

Again she turned to Mrs. Mandeville, as if seeking courage for the interview.— "Dearest Louisa!" she exclaimed, "be but yourself, and I will ask no more."

Louisa was herself, but her timid, reserved self; for notwithstanding her own desire, and the tender endeavours of her two mothers, she could not attain her usual cheerful gaiety; however, this was perhaps for the best, as any failure of manner served the more effectually to counteract Lord Ennerdale's opinion of Harcourt's enchantress; the very points in which she failed, of address and *agacerie*, as those in which, even now, she excelled, of natural politeness and unaiming quiet-

ness of manner, served to convince him that art had never aided her attractions. It was evident that an assumed look or tone was impossible to her, even where occasion might call for it; but that the constant wakefulness of her mind, and refined goodness of her heart, would rarely leave to dissimulation any thing that Politeness, that charming handmaid of Good-nature, should require of her. She endeavoured to conceal that her heart still fluttered with some remains of terror of him as a judge; but her hand, placed in Mrs. Mandeville's, with a look which seemed to solicit protection, betrayed the emotion.

Lord Ennerdale's kind heart pitied and loved it; and affectionately embracing her, he said he would not agitate her with interesting conversation until they were better acquainted.—“ I will only say,” he added, “ that I am now as much pleased with Harcourt as I was displeased with him when I entered this house; it was the first, and I hope the last time of his incurring his father's disapprobation.”

Louisa raised her head with a grateful smile, and burst into tears. Gradually drawn from her first embarrassment, Louisa became, before the end of the evening, at least an intelligent listener; but the duties of the tea-table, which occupying her hands and eyes (her greatest difficulties through the day), had, in part, relieved the extreme awkwardness of her feelings, called also for her usual attendance on Augusta.

“Where are you going, my little Louisa?” asked lord Castlebrook, when she arose, just as the eyes of Harcourt’s father were fixed on her with animated pleasure.

She smilingly pointed to the cup she held, and left the room.

“There is a trait,” said lord Castlebrook, “which may indeed delight the parents who have a claim to that child.” The expression, though intended to signify Mrs. Mandeville and lord Ennerdale, coming from his lips, went forcibly to the heart of his wife: he continued—“I saw her smiling eyes, bright with the consciousness

that she pleased lord Ennerdale, yet she left him to attend the sickbed of her friend. And let her, my lord," he added, in a lower voice to lord Ennerdale, "such as you see her, plead my excuse for having, the very next day, broken the resolution expressed in my letter. We could not live without her, and she and Mrs. Man-deville had too much real dignity of mind, to mark, by their refusal of our invitation, resentment at a step which the feelings of a parent prompted."

Never had the mothers passed an evening of more tranquil and unmingled felicity than this; they saw Louisa approved by the father of Harcourt, and in his pleasure in that approbation, and anxiety to promote it, they read the growing tenderness of lord Castlebrook. Augusta, too, though weak, had made a visible amendment, so that nothing was wanting to their happiness; however, its calm tranquillity was not long to last.

The next morning being rainy, so that he had no hope of meeting Louisa in the

grounds, too impetuous to repress his anxiety for lady Augusta, George Villars came to the house, and refusing to enter the sitting-room, sent up a message, that a person desired to see Miss Mandeville.

Lord Castlebrook happened at the moment to pass through the hall, and meeting him, offered his hand, and inquired why they had been so long without seeing him, inviting him into the library.

“My wish is to see Miss Mandeville, my lord,” he coldly answered.

Lord Castlebrook looked surprised, but, with polished hospitality, repeated his invitation.

“No, my lord !” replied Villars ; “ while I can never be received in this house in the character in which now I stand here, I will not enter it in any other. My object is to see Miss Mandeville, not to force myself as a guest at Castlebrook.”

“Mr. Villars, I do not understand you,” said lord Castlebrook ; “ you have always met a cordial reception here, then why, in this clandestine manner, meet a young

lady whom you might have seen in any of the apartments?"

"I believe," he replied, "Miss Mandeville needs no defence, and for myself, I desire to give none: her coming at this moment would relieve us both from much unpleasantness, since I cannot go until I have seen her."

"Forgive me, sir," said lord Castlebrook, "when I say, that any message you wish to deliver to Miss Mandeville might better have been given by letter to her mother, or through me."

"I did conceive, my lord," said Villars, haughtily, "that Louisa Mandeville might have seen the friend of her childhood—might have broken through the rigid strictness of proud decorum, to give a wounded heart all the balm it can receive, without suspicion; but since it is ~~not~~ so, my message can be delivered through you—the answer can only come from her."

"As the friend—the future relation of Miss Mandeville, I must beg to hear it."

"My message then," said George, "is

to inquire for lady Augusta Delamore; but here I must and will remain, until I hear from Louisa the exact progress of her recovery."

"I conceive," said lord Castlebrook, affecting not to understand him, lest any expression of the anger which swelled his breast should seem to glance on his daughter, "that Mrs. Villars might, more properly, have expressed her regard for my family, by an inquiry through her footman, in the common course of etiquette."

"Etiquette, my lord!" repeated Villars, thrown off his guard by the calm contempt with which he seemed to repel the idea of even a possibility of his daring to feel any personal interest in her welfare; "mine were not the inquiries of etiquette, but of fond solicitude!"

"Fond!" exclaimed lord Castlebrook, starting back, while rage almost deprived him of recollection—"fond solicitude for lady Augusta Delamore!" then, with an effort to suppress his indignation for the sake of his daughter, he added, more calm-

ly—" give me leave to tell you, sir, that your *solicitude*, as you are pleased to term it, might have been expressed with more reserve; however, it is now satisfied—lady Augusta Delamore is better; and now, sir, I conceive your business to be concluded," and he pointed to the door.

George's pride for the moment overcame even the care for lady Augusta, which should have led him instantly to withdraw, and he sternly answered—" My lord, I have already said, that I must and will remain till I see Miss Mandeville!"

This was a fair opportunity for the rage suppressed, lest it should be supposed that any doubt of Augusta mingled in it, to burst forth, and vehemently stamping his foot, he repeated—" And I say, sir, that I desire you instantly to quit my house."

" I will not go, my lord!" said George. " If I tamely submitted to insult, even from her father, I should be unworthy lady Augusta."

Lord Castlebrook stood thunderstruck, as if rage and astonishment had deprived

him of motion and utterance. At length, collecting himself, he advanced towards him; and in the low tremulous tone of rage *concentré*, he said—"Did I not believe, sir, that your insolent presumption is unfounded as it is daring, I should——"

Louisa, who, as she descended the staircase, had heard the latter words, sprung between them, and clinging to lord Castlebrook, drew him back.

"Do not interfere, Miss Mandeville; go into the drawing-room," he said, violently advancing.

"Dear George," she exclaimed, "what infatuation possesses you? She is better—go."

"I yield to you, Louisa," he answered, and obeyed her.

Lord Castlebrook moved towards his study, looking to Louisa to follow him for several minutes. He paced the room in silence; then locking the door, he returned to Louisa, and with quivering lips he asked—"Did you hear that expression? I can

scarcely banish the terrific idea that it had, some meaning—‘ If he submits to insult, he is unworthy lady Augusta!’ Daring impertinent! it is false—it is impossible!”

To hear her earliest and dearest friend thus spoken of, was truly painful to Louisa; but she was silent.

“ My dearest girl,” he continued, “ to doubt you, is as impossible as to doubt Augusta; yet I would ask, what was this person’s business with you?”

“ To inquire for lady Augusta,” answered Louisa.

“ And—and——” lord Castlebrook began; but unable to utter the question, he walked through the room again in silence. Again he approached her, and looking stedfastly on her agitated face, he said—“ Louisa, you know something of this—tell me all without reserve: that evening walk—what was its motive?”

At first anxiety and sorrow for George, fear of the premature disclosure to which the discovery of lady Augusta’s attachment must lead, and which might for ever

deprive her of a father's affection—apprehension for her mother, now the dreadful moment was come, and for Mrs. Mandeville, through the effect it might have on Augusta's character, had divided the heart of Louisa; but now, as she raised her eyes to the quivering form, and pale, agitated features of her father, filial affection took possession of every feeling—she threw herself into his arms.

“ I see,” he said, “ that I must hear the worst; but I can bear it now as well as at any other time; my sweet child, tell me now,” and he laid his hand on his breast, “ is my family disgraced?”

“ No,” faintly answered Louisa.

“ Then that person's insinuations were false?”

“ George Villars never spoke other than the truth,” said Louisa.

“ The truth!” he repeated, “ and is not the truth of those insinuations indelible disgrace—worse than disgrace, for Augusta has deceived me? Speak freely, my

love ; your precautions are vain, if such a truth must come."

" There is much to tell," said Louisa, unwilling to take advantage of the moment when he was irritated against Augusta ; " but I cannot tell it."

" Then who ?" he asked. " Louisa, is it possible that you too have deceived me ? that, to free her from Harcourt, you have——"

" Oh, my father," cried Louisa, " what a doubt !"

" True, my dear," he replied ; " I should never doubt you ; but a father's feelings——"

" A father's feelings !" repeated Louisa ; but she said no more.

" You say," he resumed, " that my family is not disgraced ; yet that Augusta——that this person dares to think Augusta loves him."

" Your family is not disgraced, and I trust it never shall be," said Louisa, in a firm voice, but with a fainting heart.

" Who can explain this mystery ? That

old woman Morton;" and he impatiently approached the bell.

"Mamma," said Louisa; but the tremor she felt in uttering it rendered the word inaudible. Again she repeated it in a steadier tone.

"Then may I now ask it of her?" he said.

Louisa could not utter the affirmative, which was to decide her fate as a daughter.

"Only tell me," said lord Castlebrook, the gloom of his countenance, in some degree, lightening in the idea, "is there any mystery in the birth of Villars? Is it possible that he can be born of a race worthy to aspire to a Delamore?"

"No—not his birth," was all the answer the trembling Louisa could give.

"My dear child," he said, "I am not able to seek your mother; beg of her to come here to me; my present sufferings will excuse such a request."

Louisa felt unwilling to relinquish the

hand which, with a sinking heart, she thought perhaps for the last time held hers with paternal fondness—" Promise," she said, as he led her towards the door, " that nothing you may hear shall deprive me of your affection."

" What can I hear that could?" exclaimed lord Castlebrook; and when he saw the trembling agitation of her appearance when she left him, he felt that even if it should prove that she had had a share in encouraging the presumptuous Villars, he could not cease to love her, *next to his own child.*

As Louisa ascended the staircase, sometimes she flew with unusual velocity—sometimes paused to consider the dreadful importance of the errand. The door of lady Augusta's room lay open; Louisa stood near it for a moment before she could call " mamma." Her look, her voice, struck Mrs. Mandeville with the idea that her father had been informed of the truth, and had refused to acknowledge her—

“Go to him, mamma,” she said, throwing herself into the arms of Mrs. Mandeville, “and tell him all. Will he reject me?”

“No,” she replied; “lady Castlebrook’s story and mine, your family-likeness, render a doubt impossible; my child, you will be acknowledged the heiress of Castlebrook.” Mrs. Mandeville’s breast heaved with strong emotion, and her eye rested on Louisa with fixed and mournful tenderness, as she thought that in a few minutes she would be openly the daughter of another.

“But still I am yours, mamma!” exclaimed Louisa, clinging to her; “oh! assure me that I am, or vain for me will be all he can say! Do not say, mamma, that that dear name must come no more from me to you—do not make me wish to be considered by my father an impostor.”

While she remained alone, sorrow, in being in some degree parted from the authority of Mrs. Mandeville, though it were only as she must have been on her marriage—fear of lord Castlebrook’s indigna-

tion against her mother—anxiety and sympathy for the feelings of Augusta, on finding herself hurled from the splendour in which she gloried, with natural pleasure in the approaching meeting with lord Harcourt, alternately, or rather at once, possessed her heart. At the sound of lord Castlebrook's footstep, she sprung towards the door; but before she had reached it, sunk into a seat; all hope had now vanished, and she heard, in imagination, the reproaches with which he would load her, as an impostor who had beguiled the affections of his wife from his own child.

He entered, and clasping her in his arms, he wept over her in silence for several minutes. At length he exclaimed—
 “Would both were my children!”

Louisa too was long before she could utter the words which swelled her heart—
 “My mother——”

“Is forgiven, Louisa,” he replied;

“And does she yet know it?”

“Not yet, my love,” he said; “it is a painful subject. You are all I could wish,

my child—you are indeed a Delamore; but, oh! my Augusta is *very* dear to me. Would both were my children!" he again repeated, fearful of wounding the feelings of his new-found daughter, and the kind precaution was not cast away on her.

"She is not lost to you, my father," said Louisa; "both may be your children, since the dear name is permitted to me."

"My youngest child!" he exclaimed, embracing her with renewed emotion, "and, alas! my most grateful, my best! Oh, Louisa! has she not deceived me? That young man—that evening walk! oh, she has ill requited all my fond paternal tenderness."

Louisa, secretly aware of the ruling pride of her father's nature, which, feeling it reprehensible, she would not openly acknowledge to herself, now reminded him that Augusta might now be considered only in the endearing light of a daughter, without the less pleasing sensations which, under her present feelings and conduct, might attach to her as the heiress of Castlebrook.

“ That is indeed a daughter’s office, my child, my own Louisa,” exclaimed her father, bursting into tears. “ Enable me again to esteem my Augusta—that is true consolation. But, oh, Louisa, she did not know the circumstances which now excuse her! Equally she deceived me—there is the sting! I am proud, but my Augusta is more than my heiress.”

Louisa’s arguments were usually clear and unbiassed as her unsophisticated mind; but now, when it was impossible to prove Augusta in the right, she soothed him by indirect hopes of the advantages to be derived from her attachment, without entering openly on the subject. A scene, at once painful and delightful, awaited her in the meeting and reconciliation of her parents, after the exposure of her mother’s duplicity, and in first embracing that beloved mother avowedly as her child.

A glance of lord Castlebrook’s countenance reminded her of what his feelings must be respecting his so-long and dearly-loved Augusta; and conscious, from

the feelings of Mrs. Mandeville on a similar occasion, how painful to him it must be to see her place instantly filled by another, she gently drew herself from the rapturous embrace of her mother, and glided out of the room, to seek Mrs. Mandeville, and then return to Augusta, who she knew expected her.

Except each morning a short and agitated inquiry, had Villars yet been there: Augusta sedulously avoided his name; but now some confused report of the meeting between him and her father having reached her ear, she sat raised in the bed, trembling expectation agitating every feature.—“The truth, Louisa?” she vehemently exclaimed. “I know that lord Castlebrook has seen him—insulted him.”

Louisa attempted an assurance to the contrary.

“No, my dear Louisa,” she repeated, “it is in vain you attempt to deceive by words, while your countenance expresses every real feeling. At once then speak. Am I an outcast from my father’s house—

worse, from his affection? and more than all——Oh, Louisa! it is much more——was George insulted?”

The trembling Louisa could not command the power of utterance.

Augusta sprung from her bed, and ere Louisa had time to perceive her purpose, she had reached the door; there, however, she was stopped by Mrs. Mandeville, and, overpowered by the effort, sunk into her arms; but with returning vigour she attempted to rush from them, in pursuit of her father, whose violence, together with George's haughty sternness of temper, she dreaded would lead to bloodshed.

Mrs. Mandeville and Louisa, by assurances that his anger was already appeased, tranquillized her sufficiently to enable them to place her on the bed; but there, fervently grasping a hand of each, while every quivering fibre expressed her mental conflict, she solemnly adjured them, candidly, and without reserve, to repeat every word spoken either by her father or Villars, whose vehemence she dreaded

, as much as the proud resentment of lord Castlebrook.

Mrs. Mandeville faithfully complied with her request; she laid herself back on the pillow, pale as marble, and pressing her trembling hand on her brow, so as to shade her face, she listened in silence, and without movement, except now and then a start of nervous tremor.—“Mrs. Mandeville,” at length she said, “I do not ask advice—my purpose is fixed—do not torture me with remonstrance; but in you and in Louisa, rather than in my own parents, I wish to repose confidence, to seek tenderness, independent of advice. With filial duty I have loved my mother—with higher feelings, with far stronger affection, my dear and honoured father; but my heart knew not the softness, the minutiae, if I may so term it, of deep and rooted attachment, until it fixed on—on——” Augusta felt a natural timidity in boldly asserting her love; but casting it aside as girlish frivolity, she added firmly, “until it fixed on George Villars. Shall I then,

to gratify the *false* pride of my parents—to adhere, Louisa, to *mistaken* principles of duty—to follow the *narrow* prejudices of education, cast away the happiness, the only real happiness that can await me—the love—nay, that I cannot alienate—but the support, the counsel of Villars? Shall I destroy *his* every hope of felicity, and see him sink into the grave? No, never, I am determined. I know that my father's consent, or his forgiveness, can never be obtained, and——”

She had spoken slowly, and with apparent calmness; but here, when she was about to express her resolution to bring disgrace, as she conceived it, on her family, and to give up for ever the affection of her father, an involuntary shriek burst from her lips.

It was long before she could sufficiently recover from hysterical agitation to speak; at length she resumed—“ In education, in intellect, in understanding, in information, he is my equal—nay, hear the proud Augusta Delamore confess it—my su-

perior. Then where is the inferiority? In those trifles, Louisa, which perish with this 'wreath of clay,' and to procure these for others, or for myself, shall I give up the enjoyments of the heart—the mind? Oh, Mrs. Mandeville, his conversation has not been the vain flattery, the rhapsodic praises of a lover! he has expanded my views—he has led me forward, seeming himself to be led by me. He is the friend, the chosen companion of my heart."

Mrs. Mandeville, unable to suppress her strong emotion, arose, and looking significantly at Louisa, left the room.

Louisa more closely approached her friend, as if to speak, and seating herself on the bed, remained silent.

"You cannot disapprove of my sentiments, Louisa," said Augusta, fixing her eyes on her agitated countenance, as if she read there disapprobation, and wished to persuade herself to the contrary. "It was you first sought to instill them. George Villars might now lie in the grave ;

Augusta might now be supposed to triumph in the power of her charms, while her heart really withered in splendid wretchedness, but for your words, your example. You cannot condemn your own work."

"If this is my work, I may glory in it," said Louisa; "and, my dearest Augusta, since I have gone so far, may I not hope that your opinions have altogether undergone a change—that you would not now (here Louisa trembled, but endeavoured to speak with cheerfulness) consider a more lowly station necessarily a less happy one?"

"No," she answered, "wildly confused indeed must be my views, if I could rejoice in being born of a family of whom I am the first—the only disgrace."

"Disgrace!" repeated Louisa. "My dear Augusta, can you in such a light consider your union with such a man as George Villars?"

"In myself I should feel honoured and

raised by it," she said; "but as the heiress of Castlebrook——Oh, Louisa, my feelings are strangely complicated!"

"You once remarked," said Louisa, "that, as sisters, you and I should be admirably calculated for the happiness of our parents. Let us wander a little into fairy land, and suppose both the children of mamma. How happy all would be! The child who requires some adventitious circumstance to display the virtues which she flatters herself she possesses, is about to receive reflected honour; while she whose talents, whose beauty, whose dignity, and loftiness of character, need not such borrowed plumes, is about to unite herself to one who can fully appreciate her—to whom she can look up with the reverence of a wife, without losing, in the dazzle of splendour and high round of fashion, that lofty grandeur of nature which shines most brightly where its lustre is all its own."

"That indeed were fairy land," said Augusta, faintly smiling.

“Then you would not dislike me for a sister, or mamma for a mother?” said Louisa, affectionately.

“Oh, would to Heaven I had been born of her!” exclaimed Augusta. “Then might I have gloried in my choice; then might I have fixed all my pride on his talents—all my pleasure in his virtues; then might I have been really happy—then might I have been really worthy!”

“Well, shall Titania use her fairy wand? shall I wave this myrtle, and transform you into Augusta Villars, *alias* Mandeville, and myself into Louisa Harcourt?” asked Louisa, with an effort at playfulness, to avoid forcing herself to an explanation, if she should find her unable to bear it; but there was something in her manner unlike its usual spontaneous gaiety.

Augusta fixed on her her eagle eye, with a look of doubt and uncertainty as to her meaning; and the quick glance of Louisa towards her face confirmed her in the idea that she meant something, though

what she could not imagine.—“ My dear Louisa,” she said, “ you have some meaning. What can it be ? ”

“ What I trust you would wish,” answered Louisa, dropping her face on the pillow.

“ Nay,” said Augusta, “ you cannot act the deceiver. You have prepared me for much—then freely speak.”

“ You are the child of mamma,” said Louisa, tremulously.

Augusta leaned back on the pillows ; a momentary movement convulsed her lip ; she fixed her eye on Louisa, until turning deadly pale, she sunk fainting on her shoulder. When recovered, she said—“ Speak of it, my dearest friend, no more ; let me myself consider its happy effects. Louisa Delamore is an honour to her name—a blessing to her parents.”

She spoke with evident effort ; and a secret glance stolen to Louisa’s face betrayed that she uttered the truth without certainty, merely from the proud wish of anticipating whatever she might hear.

Louisa's silence informed her that she was right, and closing her eyes, she lay in motionless meditation for several hours.

Lord Castlebrook, in the meantime, leaving a note expressive of undiminished affection, to be delivered in case the disclosure should be made during his absence, had left the castle for London.

At first the prejudice which Villars's presumptuous attachment had excited against him, made him doubt whether his ambition, rather than his heart, had been interested; but on Mrs. Mandeville's assurances, that from his character such a suspicion must be unjust, he determined on laying the statement before government, only representing the exchange as effected by a nurse, and obtaining for Villars some honourable post in the diplomatic line, which would at once serve to display his talents, and remove Augusta from England, until the first curiosity had subsided, and she should appear as the wife of an admired and useful statesman.

His stay was no longer than the business required. The high interest of his noble family, and that of Harcourt, now the popular favourite, as well as the object of ministerial favour, obtained it without difficulty; and on the fourth day they prepared again to return to Castlebrook.

The time of his absence had been chiefly passed by Augusta in silence; but when she spoke, it was with cheerful serenity, and always with marked affection towards Louisa. Villars had not yet been admitted to her presence; but on the day of lord Castlebrook's expected return, she smilingly said to Louisa—"Your fairy wand was at once to change—transform us both to our new plans of happiness; then let George Villars and lord Harcourt return together."

Her desire was literally complied with, as Mrs. Mandeville felt that the additional emotion, in meeting him and lord Castlebrook at once, would be less injurious than a redoubled stroke. When the carriage

stopped at the door, she blushed, and asked, was it lord Castlebrook's?

Louisa replied in the affirmative, and fearful of wounding her feelings, by taking a daughter's place in flying to meet her father, she remained quietly by her couch, nor advanced one step towards the door, even while the well-known tread of Harcourt approached it.

George Villars, who had been detained by lady Castlebrook until the arrival of her lord, accompanied them.

Augusta gave her hand to each, without speaking, until, as lord Harcourt approached, she whispered—"I congratulate you."

At first lord Castlebrook forbore to agitate her by caresses; but at length, overcome by emotions of tenderness, he clasped her in his arms, and weeping over her, exclaimed—"My child! my child!"

The tears which then mingled with his, Mrs. Mandeville hailed as the happy omen of softer feelings; and the silent drops

which stole down Louisa's cheek Harcourt regarded with fond delight; they flowed from the kindest sympathies of nature, unmingled with one emotion to sully their holy purity.

Lord Castlebrook soon mentioned the object of his journey to London, and its success; and taking Villars's hand, in which he placed that of Augusta, he said —“ I rejoice, that in promoting our domestic felicity, I have been of benefit to my country, by placing, in a more conspicuous and active line, the talents of one who will, I trust, be one of its brightest ornaments. Nor can I give my sovereign a higher pledge of the sincerity of the opinion I expressed to him of the man I wished to be his servant, than in trusting to him the happiness of my Augusta. To the man who is worthy of her,” he added, with tears of fond paternal tenderness, “ I would willingly submit the government of kingdoms. But the peerage must not lose so high an ornament as my Augusta. Villars will obtain for her,

as the reward of personal merit, that rank which she has hitherto held only as derived from others."

"No," said Augusta, blushing highly, "mine was not the pride of title, which every upstart peer might share with me; I have gloried in the stainless honour of my ancestors, and their lofty name; and I fear my dear Louisa's cares will still be necessary to subdue my tenacious pride; it will be too ready to turn, with all its former strength, to the talents of my husband—the fame of my father. George will prepare new themes for it to rest on, though here must end for ever 'Family Pride.'"

S I L E N C E ;

OR,

THE SISTERS.

VOL. III.

H

SILENCE.

“**T**HAT castle,” said the respectable vicar of B——, in answer to the inquiries of a stranger, who had joined him in his evening walk, “that castle is now uninhabited ; it is, alas ! now the property of the countess of Dellaville.”

“Is she unworthy,” asked the stranger, “or why that sigh?”

“She is most worthy,” replied the vicar, “and is deservedly beloved in this neighbourhood, as well as by all who know her. My sigh was given to the memory of her brother, who, possessing every virtue, every attraction of character, was once regarded as the heir of this castle.”

“Did he then die young?” said the stranger.

“ Alas ! sir, his fate was an unhappy one ! it has never been clearly ascertained whether he is living or dead ; though of his death there was once a report, of the truth of which there has been no reason since to doubt. Severe affliction drove him from his friends ; it is now twenty years since he left them, and——”

The stranger interrupted—“ Did they regret him ?”

“ Yes, sir, bitterly, and long ; even to this hour, his sister and lord Dellaville——”

Again the stranger interrupted, by asking—“ Was the affliction alluded to that of guilt or misfortune ?”

“ Of misfortune certainly,” said the vicar, emphatically.

The stranger advanced a few paces with rapidity, and the vicar, perceiving that his eye was caught by the parish-church, towards which they were approaching, asked, would he wish to go to the churchyard, which, being on an eminence, commanded a very beautiful prospect ? The stranger acquiesced by a movement only of his

head, and as they pursued their walk, preserved an unbroken silence.

“ Yonder white marble pillar, rising among the trees,” said the good vicar, who was interested by the visible dejection of the traveller, and wished by conversation to dispel it, “ was erected by the parishioners of B——, in gratitude and affection to those who rest beneath it—the late rector of this parish, and his daughter, Selina Hamilton.”

The stranger started, made a few hasty steps forward, and then returned to his companion.

They had now almost reached the spot. —“ There,” continued Mr. Seymour, “ there, in that tomb, are united the most virtuous, the best of human beings. But stop,” he added, in a low voice, drawing back the stranger, and pointing to a female figure, which knelt by the grave.

Her fair hands were clasped upon her breast in an attitude of prayer ; her lips moved, and her eyes were uplifted with an expression of transport : traces of exquisite

beauty yet remained, but the freshness of youth no longer dyed her cheek, or its smiles adorned her lip; her auburn hair alone seemed to have escaped the ravages of time and suffering, and the flowers tastefully mingled with it, forming a marked contrast with her solemn countenance and occupation, added to the general wildness of her air. At the sound of footsteps she arose, and pressing her lips to the marble, she was hastily quitting the churchyard, when the vicar gently pronounced the name, "Matilda."

Turning, she smiled on him with exquisite sweetness, and, with childlike fondness, kissing his hand, she said—"I was in heaven when you came—I was just listening to her songs of praise; but do not grieve that you interrupted me—I love to see you here. See, I have covered her grave with roses; I thought she and papa saw it and smiled on me; but you know I am sometimes fanciful—I am not with them, though I see them—but look, they are her own roses—the first I have had

this year," she added, drawing Mr. Seymour forward as she spoke; "oh, what delight to think that they enjoy the same perfume as Matilda does! but he——" she paused, and all her smiles were gone—"oh, never, never!—perhaps——but I will not think of him so soon after having seen Selina. He was my brother; my brother Frederick perhaps is with his Selina, though I have not seen him, and she would have shewn him to me if he was there—it was her joy to make me happy. Oh! no, no!"

"Why were you flying at the sound of footsteps, my child?" said the rector, as if to change the course of her thoughts.

She was intently gazing on the half-concealed face of the stranger; but on the respected voice, she turned, and asked what he had said?—"I was going, because—because—I forget. What did you ask, sir?" and again her eyes fixed themselves on the stranger. "He is not in heaven," said she, in a low and hurried tone. "I am very fanciful and forgetful this evening, sir," she at length said to the vicar,

laying her hand on her forehead. Then looking again at the stranger, she added, "I love that gentleman, he is so like——". She paused. "Selina, perhaps it is——I cannot speak to him now; but I must see him when I am quite well to-morrow, before I come here to Selina; for after I have been with her, I cannot think of other things." Then gently, but fervently, pressing the hands of Mr. Seymour, she smiled on the stranger, and was out of sight in a moment, followed by a female attendant, who waited at a little distance.

The stranger strained his eyes to mark the last traces of her figure, and when she was gone, he laid his hand on his breast, with a sigh almost amounting to a groan; then walking a few yards from Mr. Seymour, he endeavoured to calm his emotion. The vicar regarded him earnestly. His eyes were sunk, his hair almost white, his cheek deadly pale; but his wasted form preserved a majesty of air—his step, though feeble, a dignity—his eye, though sunk and tearful, a power of glancing the bright-

ness and haughtiness of youth, which proved that not age, but sorrow, had

“ Furrowed his firm cheek,
And turned his bright locks grey.”

“ Might I, sir,” said the vicar, “ request you to accept a bed at my house? The lonely traveller is ever sure to meet a hearty welcome from my wife, and there I can relate to you the story of this poor Matilda, who must be interesting to every feeling heart. It is nearly connected with that of the lost heir of Percy Abbey, and of the sister for whom you saw her lament.”

“ Do, do,” exclaimed the stranger, in a suffocated voice.

“ You will then permit me to present you to my wife?”

The stranger bowed assent, and was conducted to the residence of the vicar, where, after having prevailed on him to take some refreshment, Mr. Seymour thus began :—

“ It is now ~~about~~ about thirty-seven years since Matilda Hamilton smiled, a baby, in

these arms. She is the daughter of the last rector of this parish by a second marriage; his first wife also left him one daughter, but a few months old at the period of her mother's death. From her first consciousness, Selina's affectionate heart attached itself to a young lady, distantly related to her father, and it was his child's fondness for Miss Mansell first led him to an intimate knowledge of her worth—a knowledge which soon inspired the attachment that ended only with his life. At three years old, Selina again possessed a mother, and in three years after, Matilda was born. As the little sisters grew up, their hearts were twined in each other, and they were almost equally dear to Mrs. Hamilton, for Selina's infant sweetness had won her affection, so as to balance the feelings peculiar to a mother.

“ Never did a happier family bless Heaven for its happiness than that of Mr. Hamilton, until Selina had attained her fourteenth, and Matilda her eighth year; the health of the inestimable wife and mother

then began to decline, and she was ordered to remove to the Continent. Sad was the day of their departure to themselves, and all surrounding them. Mr. Hamilton presaged the loss of the idolized partner of his life; with the elastic spirit of childhood, Selina hoped for her immediate recovery, yet never had she known an affliction like leaving England, for there remained all that she loved out of the domestic circle. She left my wife and me, to whom she was much attached—she left her only female companion, Anna Percy, the daughter of the gentleman who formerly occupied the castle you, sir, were observing this evening; and sadder than all, she left Anna's brother, about five years older than herself.

“ From the time of the first Mrs. Hamilton's death, Frederick Percy had felt the tenderest pity and affection for her orphan; but as Selina began to grow up, he felt her deserving of more than mere tenderness. Young as she was, her virtues, her self-denial, her self-command, en-

forced esteem, while her winning sweetness gained universal affection ; and young as Frederick was, he was capable of appreciating the mingled softness and dignity of her character. To no one did Selina love so much to relate little traits of Matilda's sweet disposition, and in his approbation she felt as much pleasure as in that of her parents. She alone too had the power of drawing him from the silence and reserve of his habits, partly caused by natural disposition, and partly by the too great harshness of his parents towards him.

“ But, to continue, sad indeed was the hour of their parting ; the group is still before me ; I almost see the graceful form of Frederick, as he held Selina's hand in his—the silent woe of his manly face—Selina's pale cheek and quivering form—the tears of Anna, as she repeatedly embraced the sisters—little Matilda clinging to him, her little arms twined around his neck, her pretty cheek pressed closely to his. When the carriage came to the door, he seemed convulsed with agony, and forcibly

detained Selina—‘It is for mamma’s health, dearest Frederick; our sorrow will grieve her, and I trust we shall soon return,’ Selina said. He charged her to answer his letters; she promised to do so, and they separated. I saw that he felt Selina’s manner cold, and her calmness unkind; but for worlds she would not, at that moment, have added, by her tears, one pang to her parents’ hearts.

“ Frederick’s feelings, though under habitual restraint, were sensitive beyond what I have ever seen; he was far, very far, from a suspicious or jealous disposition, yet often he mistakenly fancied himself slighted by those he loved; he was bashful, diffident, yet haughty—diffidently apprehensive of repulse, and haughtily guarded against incurring it: with Selina alone he had ever been open, free, and candid; but from this character you cannot be surprised, sir, at his story. I may, in their course, explain to you circumstances, which, when they occurred, were to us inexplicable, but which I have since learned

from letters, and from those who knew every feeling of the parties.

“ Mrs. Hamilton did not survive the year; she expired in Selina’s arms, confiding her little Matilda to her care, as to that of a second parent, for even at that early age, the superiority, the firmness, which ever marked her character, had been visible to the attentive eyes of friendship. Mrs. Hamilton left her ten thousand pounds, exactly half the fortune of her own daughter, and Selina’s gratitude for this mark of maternal affection, added another link to bind her heart to her little sister; but her health seemed declining under the affliction she had sustained, and her father, struggling for her sake against the weight of sorrow which overwhelmed him, sought for her every scene of gaiety and amusement.

“ At Florence, at Paris, and in London, Selina Hamilton’s early charms were extolled and worshipped. Her father received several proposals of marriage for her, from men of rank, fortune, and worth,

all of which she steadily, though mildly, refused.

‘ Firm to reject, yet fearful to offend,
 ‘The lover she refused, she made a friend.’

Her only given reason was, that her wish was to devote herself to the education of her sister, and a single life, as she was sure she would never meet in marriage a mind precisely suited to her own. When questioned on the grounds of this idea, she would only answer, ‘ she had a presentiment—she was well convinced of it.’ Her fond father never pressed her more, and calling her his ‘ sweet nun,’ and his ‘ own companion for life,’ the wish for her marriage seemed never to occur to him, nor did he seek to investigate her feelings, resting satisfied that her doting love of Matilda, and her devoted filial affection, alone had caused her determination.

“ Mrs. Seymour and I alone conjectured what has since proved to be the truth. Her early knowledge of Frederick Percy had raised her ideas of the man she could love much—much higher than any other

man could attain to; we might have believed it only a fancy-picture, but for the strong agitation she betrayed when Mrs. Seymour one day asked her, had she answered Frederick's letters, as she promised to do on leaving him?—'No,' she answered, trembling with emotion, 'he did not write.' Jane was greatly surprised. I had often asked him, had he heard from Selina, and he always seemed even more agitated than she was on my wife's inquiry, and immediately turned the subject, or flew from me. All was then mystery; but we have since discovered, from poor Mr. Percy himself, that, not aware of Mrs. Hamilton's will in favour of her stepdaughter, also hating early engagements, and desirous that his son, whom he rather admired than loved, should develop his natural talents by intercourse with other nations, before he was burdened with a wife and family, he had suppressed his first letter. It was after a long struggle within himself, between the fear of obtruding on Selina, and the earnest desire

of seeking a correspondence with her, that Frederick ventured a second. This was also destroyed; neither ever reached Selina, who was grieved and offended by his silence, while he was distracted by her not noticing the letters which he thought she had received."

Here the narrative of Mr. Seymour was interrupted, by the groan of agony which seemed to burst from the inmost heart of his auditor. In a few minutes, by a forcible effort, he restrained his emotion, and resuming the position in which he had first placed himself, he leaned his forehead on his arms on the back of the chair, and requested the vicar to proceed, desiring that he might not again break in on the narrative, as he was subject to such attacks, and found them most easy to conquer when he was least noticed.

Mr. Seymour continued—"I forgot to mention, sir, that before the Hamiltons returned to B——, Frederick Percy had set out on the travels to which so much had been sacrificed by his father. Four years

of absence had made a great change in the appearance of the sisters. Selina was, when she returned, all that her lovely childhood had promised, except that she no longer possessed the lively flow of animal spirits, which was once so heart-cheering ; yet this did not lessen her loveliness—no, every thing served to increase it. But I must not make my story tedious ; and, indeed, were I not to check myself, there is not a period of Selina's life on which I would not dwell ; it is the greatest delight to us both, to retrace every hour we spent with her from her earliest infancy—indeed, such a character as hers, all who love to admire the brightest works of their Creator must delight to examine.

“ I must pass on until her three-and-twentieth-year, and Matilda's seventeenth. It was then that the unhappy father was taught to consider the sorrow with which he had resigned his wife to the grave as pleasurable pain, compared to that he was now about to endure—it was then that affliction entered this family of concord, for

the first time since pious resignation had soothed the husband and the daughters' hearts, on the loss of Mrs. Hamilton; for though her early attachment to Frederick had closed Selina's heart against another love, her affections were so warmly engaged—her feelings so deeply interested in her father and sister, that it had left no gloom or pangs of regret; her spirits were even and cheerful, never exhilarated by amusement, though often animated in the pursuit of objects that interested her heart; her lofty and beautifully-formed figure moved rather with the grace of softened dignity, than with the bounding step of youth; her large dark-blue eyes were rather mildly and benignly luminous, than sparkling with brilliancy; her smile expressed something celestial—it was indescribable; her features were cast in the mould of a Madona, and she always wore her dark hair dressed in that style; her dress was very plain, always white, and formed of some soft material; her voice was the sweetest harmony, usually rather

plaintive; she was fair as marble, all the life of her complexion consisting in its pure transparency, with scarcely a tinge, of colour, except in her lips; when any emotion raised it, however, it was the most glowing rose colour, and then she was, I thought, almost as beautiful as her sister; the usual character of her countenance was placidity, but brightly, sweetly have I seen her smile at the playful sallies of Matilda.

“ Matilda’s was the very perfection of beauty. You have seen her, sir. Conceive those still-exquisite features lit up with all of beauty that sensibility, intelligence, vivacity, and the richest colouring, could bestow; her figure too can give you some faint idea of what it was in the bloom of healthful, happy youth; she was indeed

‘ Fair as the forms that, wove in fancy’s loom,
Float in light vision round the poet’s head.’

“ In her beauty too there was expressed so much of mental loveliness, that no eye could dwell on her with less of ten-

derness than admiration : but description can give you no adequate idea of what Matilda was ; herself, faded as she is both in mind and person, can best enable you to imagine what she must have been ; even now, when lost to reason, every thought, every expression, has so much of prettiness as marks a mind of superior powers, and the endearing sweetness of her character still glows in all its native warmth, uninjured by the blighting afflictions which nipped the blossoms of her ripening understanding.”

Here again the stranger was overpowered to a degree that interrupted the narrative for several minutes, before he was able to entreat its continuance. Mr. and Mrs. Seymour looked at each other, but did not speak.

“ No parent could know Matilda, without wishing to have such a child ; this, too strongly, Mr. and Mrs. Percy felt. From her return to B——, it had been their most earnest wish to see her the wife of their son ; but though perfectly convinced

that Frederick need only see to love her, they justly considered it imprudent to speak to her on the subject. Mr. Percy repeatedly desired his son's return, without mentioning the cause which made him so particularly anxious for it; but, apparently captivated by foreign courts, he still pleaded for a further leave of absence. Now, when Matilda had attained to seventeen, he commanded him, on pain of his lasting displeasure, to make no more delay. Selina was absent, on a visit to her aunt, at the time of his expected arrival.

“ One lovely spring evening, Mr. Hamilton, Matilda, Anna Percy, a sweet, lovely girl, my wife and I, were walking together near the parsonage, when on that very height overhanging Percy Abbey, where you, sir, first joined me, Matilda observed at a little distance a horseman, whose air, she said, was unlike any of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. Anna instantly exclaimed that it was her brother, and flying towards him, was in a few minutes clasped in his arms. The majesty

of his perfect form—the tenderness of his caresses towards his sister—the noble, proud, yet mild and endearing expression of his fine features, struck us all with admiration as they approached. With affectionate and graceful, though embarrassed sweetness, he addressed Mr. Hamilton, Mrs. Seymour, and me; he had not yet observed Matilda, who had retreated behind her father, but instantly Mr. Hamilton drew her forward, saying—‘ See, dear Frederick, this is your little friend and favourite, Matilda.’

“ Percy gazed on her with strong emotion, which we then attributed to the surprise of her exquisite beauty—to him we thought as unexpected as it was brilliant. He kissed her offered hand warmly and affectionately; then placing it on one arm, he gave the other to his sister, and leaning between him and me, Matilda walked on. Percy was silent for some minutes. At length he asked her, did she in the least remember him?

‘ I believe I do,’ Matilda answered,

frankly, ‘ now I see you ; but never hearing you mentioned, I had almost forgotten my former affection for you.’

“ Percy started and trembled, but instantly resuming the most perfect composure, he said—‘ I thought my father and mother might have spoken of me. Anna was too young to recollect me.’ He then, in a very unsteady voice, added the inquiry—‘ Is Miss Hamilton at home?’

“ Matilda told him where her sister was, and Mr. Hamilton advancing, said—‘ My Selina will surprise you, Frederick, as much as Matilda has done ; she is a lovely, superior-looking creature as ever Nature formed, and so grown since you saw her ; indeed, in my paternal pride, I wished you to see them together, but Selina was so anxious to be with her aunt, I could not disappoint her.’

“ Again he started, and turned pale. I observed him with the utmost anxiety ; but when we reached Percy Abbey, where he and Anna joined their parents in begging us to stay the evening, he seemed so

perfectly fascinated by Matilda, hanging on every word and look, and appearing so entranced while she sung, that all the ideas which had arisen during our walk were put to flight. One song he asked for, I heard her say Anna sung much better than her; and the delighted smile with which she looked at him, when Anna had finished her exclamation, ‘Is not that beautiful?’ seemed to go to his heart. He took her hand, and—‘Just what might be expected from——’ burst from his lips. Dropping the concluding words, he turned from her, and sighed deeply; but in a moment he requested a duet from her and Anna.

“In the carriage, returning home, Matilda was enthusiastic in her praises of him.

“Next day he was early at the parsonage, and, by invitation, dined there with his family. When we entered the dining-parlour, where Selina’s picture hung over the chimney-piece, Mr. Hamilton

pointed it out to Percy—‘ That is my Selina’s picture, Frederick ; but it can give you no idea of what she is, even in beauty, now.’

“ Percy just raised his eyes to it, and answered the proud father, by remarking, in a faint voice, that it was very beautifully executed.

‘ It is executed by Matilda,’ Mrs. Percy said.

‘ Yes,’ Matilda added, ‘ and it is so very, very inferior to her real face, that I would take it down, but that even it has likeness enough to be beautiful, and delightful to us when she is away.’

“ He looked at her then with animated admiration and pleasure. Of the rest of the evening she wrote her sister an account, which we have. My love,” continued Mr. Seymour, “ find poor Matilda’s letter.”

Mrs. Seymour took from a table-drawer a pocketbook, wrought in coloured silk, from which she drew a letter, saying to the stranger—“ This drawer, sir, is dedi-

cated to my dear young friends. This letter-case was my sweet Selina's work."

The stranger seized it, and pressing it between his hands, without looking at it, he raised his eyes to heaven. Mr. Sevmour then read the letter:—



' More than ever I now long for my beloved Selina's return, for Frederick Percy is arrived, and I am sure you would be delighted with him. He must be greatly improved since we knew him formerly, or you would have doted on him, which I know you did not, as you never mentioned him to me. He is the finest-looking man I ever saw; the haughty dignity of his appearance adds a peculiar charm to the singular sweetness of his manner and voice. He is so well informed, so delightfully instructive as a companion, yet so easily pleased with others. He is very grave, rather inclining to pensiveness; but I like him the

better for it. You know I like gravity in man—and there is nothing sombre in his appearance; indeed every thing about him I think pleasing and interesting; and he likes me very much. He said last night that he thought my voice the finest he had ever heard, except one. I thought he meant yours, and asked, had you ever sung for him? but he said—“Long, long since,” in a manner which made me feel he was thinking of something else.

‘ I told him it was you had taught me singing, painting—every thing. He answered—“Yes, I knew it,” in such an absent abstracted way as quite provoked me. The only thing I do not like in him is, that he seems utterly to forget his former intimacy with our family.

‘ I reminded him of the day we left B., which I perfectly remember; but instead of answering, he turned away, and made some remark foreign to the subject. I laughed at him, and said I was sure he had been, in love ever since, or he could not feel so little interest in early recollec-

tions; and I found I had hit on the truth, for he blushed like scarlet, and sighed from the bottom of his heart. He then held out his hand to me, and said, solemnly—"Matilda, that is a subject you must not touch on."

'I am glad I know his secret, as it will secure my heart, which otherwise I am sure would be in great danger. He is indeed much more pleasing than any one I ever met, except my own beloved sister; and his manner is so cordially and admirably affectionate to me.

'I am interrupted by him and Anna, who have called for me to ride. Do, do come home, dearest Selina, to your own
'M. H.'

"Look, sir, at poor Matilda's beautiful writing," said Mr. Seymour, presenting the letter to the stranger, who, with shuddering emotion, placed his hand before his eyes, and pushing the letter from him,

said—"Go on—go on, sir; do not attend to me—continue your narrative, without omitting the smallest, most minute circumstances; but do not notice me."

The rector produced another letter, from which he read as follows:—

'Yesterday I thought for a moment I was mistaken in my idea of his foreign attachment, and that you were really the object of his love, for I found him gazing at your picture so intently, that he did not hear me enter the room; but I was soon undeceived, for as soon as he saw me, he made some remark on the painting, which plainly shewed me it was only as a connoisseur he admired it. Indeed, on reflection, I felt the absurdity of my own idea, both from the early age at which you were separated, his wish to prolong his absence, and all that had passed since his return. I will confess the truth to you—you have been mother as

well as sister to me, and I should be miserable in having a thought concealed from you—I love him more than I thought I did. When the idea of his loving you occurred to me, I felt myself tremble; were there a mutual attachment, I could, without a sigh, see you his wife, and rejoice in your happiness, even though purchased by some diminution of my own; but if he were attached to you without return, or if he really loves a foreign lady, it would make me very unhappy. I confess to you also, that if his heart is disengaged, I am sure it will soon be mine—he is so partial to every thing I do, seems so gratified by my affection for Anna, and is so constantly here. How I wish that my darling Selina was with me, to tell me whether I deceive myself, or whether Frederick Percy really admires me, as I think he does!



“ The next letter to Selina,” said the

rector, " is from my dear old friend, their " father."

‘ Why does my Selina delay so long to return to us? Her absence must always make us less happy; but now I am very anxious about our Matilda—I scarcely know how I ought to act; and I feel as if I should certainly do the best, if the sweet guardian angel of my household was with me. You know from her that F. P. is arrived. On first meeting Matilda, he seemed struck and surprised by her beauty, so much so, that until we had walked nearly half-way home, he could not speak with tolerable composure, and even then, whenever he looked at her, he seemed agitated.

‘ I need not go on with particulars—you will have all from herself, Anna, and me, when you come home. You have often said yourself, that her beauty was of the kind to excite love at first sight—all her soul speaks so in it; her manners too

must strengthen the impression her beauty makes ; all contributes to gain for her, on first acquaintance, the tender admiration which every hour after proves that she deserves. From this I think we need not fear that his is a mere romantic fancy, though he has yet known her but ten days. She says herself, that he loves and admires her as my child, Anna's friend, and one he was fond of in infancy, but that he has never said any thing implying a stronger attachment. Frederick was always silent and reserved, so that his not having yet expressed his feelings does not alarm me, though I certainly do not wish him much longer to continue his devoted attentions without speaking openly. Ten days of *constant* intercourse is far from a short period.

His parents and Anna say he is quite in love with her ; that he frequently says she is one of the loveliest and most excellent of human beings, and that in beauty she is unrivalled ; he never saw a counte-

nance more beautifully speak the feelings, and never met feelings more calculated to give beauty its highest charm. I feel perfectly convinced that a few days more will see him her avowed lover; but I cannot bear that any man should become so without being known to, and approved by her sister-mother; besides, Seymour says he is less certain than I am, that Matilda must be loved and admired by all who know her, and that Frederick's admiration may go no farther than that of many others. His parents insist that he only delays a declaration until he has some confidence of Matilda's regard; but she is not a creature to be trifled with. In the meantime her affections may be irrevocably his. I see that he has made an impression on her innocent heart, much deeper than she is at all sensible of.

'To you, my sweet Selina, she was consigned by her blessed mother—then why are you absent at this very important period? To your care I also have principally committed our mutual treasure, and

your early-ripened understanding, your perfection in every respect, make me look to you as an oracle. Come then, my love, immediately. All will go well, if it is under the guardianship of my sainted child.

G. H.'



Mr. Seymour continued—" Frederick did greatly admire her—Matilda was indeed the most fascinating of human beings—the cordial warmth of her heart gave to her manner all the attraction of glowing animation; her sensibility and delicacy of feeling, that of the most sweet attention to the feelings of others. Always gay, her spirits were never too high, for her sunny smiles, her happy voice, her laugh of infantine gaiety, her playfulness, raised those of others to their own level. Her beauty was of that exquisite perfection, that it would have been affectation to say she was unconscious of it—and affectation was known to Matilda only by name—she was conscious of it, but she

was so perfectly free from vanity, that she rarely thought of it, except when she smiled at the pleasure it gave her father and sister: of her accomplishments she was conscious, with the same freedom from vanity; she would play and sing for strangers, gratified by the applause she received, because it proved that they were pleased; but if there was another in company, whom her judgment told her possessed superior or equal powers, she would say so with the utmost simplicity, and then, when she was again pressed to sing, she would frankly comply, and hear her own praises echoed round the room, without one sentiment of elated vanity. Her innocent *unconscious consciousness* of attraction often reminded me of Milton's Eve; but the mirror in which she saw her charms reflected, was the fond admiration of her father and sister.

"A little instance of her sweet unenvying disposition now occurs to me. Anna Percy excelled in painting flowers, in which, not being her favourite style, Ma-

tilda was not equally skilful; but Mr. Percy, always partial to 'the little enchantress,' as he called her, above his own girl, persisted that in this, as in figures and landscapes, Matilda's touch was much preferable to hers. One day Matilda playfully called on him to admire her paintings, of which she produced a number. Mr. Percy singled out a rose, and turning to his daughter, said—'There, Anna, can you produce a flower to equal that?' With exulting pleasure she then told him that this was one of Anna's, which she had placed among her own, on purpose to call forth his real opinion, unbiassed by parental anxiety. She would often laughingly speak of the admiration she excited, and say she could not help thinking her admirers gave a proof of bad taste, in preferring her face to Selina's, for she thought Selina's features, and look altogether, a thousand times prettier than her own—'For,' she said once, 'though I am such a laughter-lover, I have a very sentimental

taste.' Oh, she was lovely! I make digressions, sir; but I cannot help it when I speak of her."

"No, no," interrupted the stranger; "but speak of—of—her sister."

"Of Selina I cannot speak," said Mr. Seymour; "we can remind each other of every hour spent in her dear society, but I cannot dwell on little incidents of her, as of Matilda. Matilda was the loveliest of our own species, but Selina was above it—Selina always seemed, as her dear father said, the guardian angel of her family; on the minds of those who knew her, every word she uttered is impressed; but I know not what my feeling is towards her. She was too sacred, too superior, for us to think of her with the familiar fondness we do of Matilda; yet she endeared herself—she entwined herself into the inmost recesses of every heart: she was perfection—if she had one fault, there was but one."

The stranger raised his head, and ex-

claimed—"Selina a fault!" then colouring deeply, he added—"You spoke of her as faultless."

"I did," said Mr. Seymour, "because her fault, that pride which the most refined and elevated of her sex usually confound with modesty, is generally regarded as a virtue. She perhaps carried that beautiful characteristic of woman, 'which would be wooed, and not unsought be won,' to a length which those who saw its fatal consequences cannot but lament. It was this which, by absenting her from home at so critical a juncture, was the originating cause of all the afflictions of her family; but it influenced her no farther than in laying the foundation of the event which served at once to call into action all the virtues of her noble, disinterested soul, and to bring down a weight of woe, which bowed her own fair head to an early grave, blighted the lovely blossom she so fondly cherished, consigned to misery and exile the man she loved, and broke the heart of the tenderest of pa-

rents. The sentiment or action which produced such effects must have been erroneous in some respect, though we cannot now precisely say in what. A timely word, a look, might have warded off this ruin."

The good man paused for a moment, in too great emotion to proceed, and then continued—"The day of Selina's return, my wife and I, with the Percy family, dined at the parsonage. She arrived later than was expected, and after Mrs. Seymour and I were there. Matilda, watching for her in the window, flew out to meet the carriage; but as Selina clasped her to her bosom, her countenance beamed nothing of the joy which dimpled Matilda's glowing cheek. She repeated and repeated her embrace, seeming to take her sister to her inmost heart; and her beautiful eyes raised to heaven, the solemnity of her countenance seemed to me afterwards, as if she had, in that moment, vowed to sacrifice her own every earthly hope to this precious child, so

often consigned to her care and tenderness, both by her dead and living parent. At the time it only appeared like the natural emotion of a guardian friend, for the interesting situation in which her darling charge then stood.

“ During this day, and for many more, no suspicion of the truth crossed my mind ; on the contrary, the dejection of her looks, and the emotion she at times betrayed, led me rather to apprehend that she did not see Percy with the favourable eyes we did, and that she doubted the happiness of her sister’s probable lot.

“ When the Percys came to dinner, she had not yet returned from her own room, where she had gone with Matilda, at her father’s desire, to change her travelling-habit for an evening-dress.

“ Frederick was silent and thoughtful, sometimes rising in strong agitation, sometimes fixing his countenance with forced composure. This was visible to all, and by all attributed to his sense of the influence Selina would have over the senti-

ments of her sister, and only served farther to confirm the idea of his passion for her.

“ When the sisters entered, the complexion of Selina, which had been before unusually pale, had risen to the most brilliant glow. Never before or since did I see her look so lovely as on that day, for a creature of this world, though I have, on some occasions, seen her look more heavenly, more above the world.

‘ Here she is,’ exclaimed Matilda, smiling with exulting delight, as she led her in.

“ Her father looked at Percy, the most animated pleasure speaking in his venerable countenance. Percy arose as she advanced, and when, with cold reserve, Selina extended her hand to him, he took it with yet more frigid, chill politeness.

‘ You are not glad to see her, Frederick,’ said the fond father; ‘ you do not remember what friends you were in childhood.’

‘ I can scarcely hope,’ replied Percy, coldly, ‘ that nine years of separation, new scenes, and new friends, should not have

wholly erased me from Miss Hamilton's memory.'

"He then turned to Matilda, who had blushingly retreated, and taking her hand, he said—'Is sweet Matilda too completely occupied with her sister to wish to hear more of the peasantry of Russia, about which she was inquiring yesterday?'

"He led her to a sofa, while Selina suffered Anna to draw her into a window. I did not overhear their conversation, but I fancy Anna was telling her instances of her brother's attachment to Matilda.

"When dinner was announced, Frederick sprung forward, and begged to attend *Miss Hamilton* down. She coloured, then turned pale; but his eyes, cast on the ground, could not see the change; then giving him her hand, she said to me—'Mr. Seymour, do not let me lose my place beside you.'

"Frederick, flushed to crimson, coldly attended her to the parlour; then leading her to the chair next mine, he said—'Your sister is anxious to claim the other

seat by you,' and placing Matilda there, he seated himself beside her.

"These traits will serve to shew how free from blame both families were in pursuing the projected union, which ended so fatally. I saw Selina's manner cold and distant to him—his equally so to her; and a few days after her return, I asked her, had she any reason to think him unworthy of Matilda? She exclaimed—'No, no, he alone deserves her.' And that evening I saw her endeavour to conquer the chill reserve of her manner, and to join him in general conversation. Her countenance, whose placid sweetness had been once so animated, was become lifeless, as to things of this world, only expressing, at times, as she looked upward, a kind of solemn devotion, which I now understand to have been silent prayers for strength to support her high resolve. Her manner towards her father was tenderly affectionate as ever; but she seemed no longer to be alive to the thousand endearing attentions which had once so

sweetly adorned it. Towards Matilda alone she was as fondly caressing as ever. For several minutes together, I have seen her gaze on her, then gently clasp her hands together, and raising her eyes to heaven, kiss, or enter into conversation with Matilda. When alone with us, the chill of death seemed to hang on her; but in the presence of her father and sister, she so far succeeded in her struggles with herself, as to prevent their being alarmed.

“ But Mrs. Seymour saw it. Fondly attached to both, I believe my wife, if possible, loved Selina even more than her sister. Her suspicions of her declining health once excited, she constantly observed her with apprehension.

“ Such, sir, were her manners towards Percy, that, far from an idea of the truth entering our minds, I asked my wife, did she think it possible that she had formed an unhappy attachment during her visit to her aunt?

“ Jane caught at the idea, and, as she

watched her for the two or three following days, every thing served to strengthen it."

"Yes," said Mrs. Seymour, "the mingled expression of her countenance, as she looked at Matilda, appeared to me a struggle in her own mind between pleasure in her sister's felicity, and painful recollection of her own less prosperous love; her agitation, her abstraction—all I attributed to the same source.

"The three families, about a fortnight after her return, were together at Mr. Hamilton's house. After dinner the young ladies proposed music, and Matilda playfully whispered Percy—'Now you shall hear Selina sing, and know that mine is not the finest voice you ever heard, except that of a foreign lady.'

"Frederick said—'It is not a foreign lady;' but before he spoke, Matilda was busied in arranging the music for her sister, and disputing with Anna what song Selina most excelled in.

"It was the first time Selina had sung since her return home; her voice was then

tremulous and unlike itself, yet its magic sweetness, its exquisite pathos, sunk to the heart.

“ Percy stood behind her; but my thoughts, and those of my husband, were fixed on an object very distant. We heard the plaintive tones of her voice, and were only confirmed in our false suspicions. I did remark, however, that when she had concluded, he was the only person who expressed no pleasure; and I felt angry and irritated for my dear Selina, when I saw him take Matilda’s hand, and with strong emotion entreat of her to sing.

“ Matilda coloured at this almost-insult to her idolized sister, and angrily said—
 ‘ If Mr. Percy can only admire the display of science and fine execution, Selina’s pupil may please him better than Selina’s self, languid as she is this evening.’

“ Percy gazed on her with transport, and when he uttered no word of praise, and seemed as inattentive to her as he had been to her sister, I admired what I imagined the delicacy of his feelings to-

wards Matilda, which induced him, I thought, to appear as if he was that evening not in a humour for music, instead of, seeming not to admire the singing she so fondly delighted in. Selina's was the music of heaven; Matilda's the gayest, sweetest harmony of earth.

“ The evening was peculiarly lovely, and all soon expressed a wish to walk. Selina, Anna, Frederick, and I, joined in one group; while Matilda went with her father, Mr. Percy, and my husband, to shew them a distant part of the grounds. After we had walked a few steps in silence, Anna turned to her brother, and said—‘ I own, Frederick, I wonder at your taste; you might prefer Matilda's singing to Selina's, but surely, except Matilda, no one ever equalled even what hers was to-day. It must be great partiality makes you think a foreigner exceeds her.’

‘ One far, far estranged from me, alone equals Matilda in any thing,’ said Frederick, actually quivering from emotion; and after a long pause he added—‘ I trust

Miss Hamilton is aware that no human being—that no——Oh, Miss Hamilton ! if you knew how much my happiness depends on you—if you would permit me—’

‘ It is a more important trust, sir, than I desire to be honoured with,’ said Selina, coldly.

“ Instantly the agitation of Percy’s look and manner was exchanged for the most chill reserve. Still influenced by the idea of his attachment to Matilda, both Anna and I, as well as Selina herself, understood his words as an application for her influence with her sister, and her answer as a refusal of this; but Frederick intended otherwise, and applied her answer to his meaning. You wonder, sir, that an old woman like me should remember every word, and be able to repeat every exclamation so accurately; but, sir, they are graven on my heart, and thence flow to my lips.

“ Frederick, after a moment’s pause, in which he seemed to collect every agitated thought, and to shut his real feelings from

every eye, made some common observation; Selina coldly answered him, and they carried on a conversation on general subjects for about a quarter of an hour, when Frederick requested her to apologise to her father and sister for his return home, as he had letters to write. Anna said she would join the other party, and Selina and I remained together. I told her, 'that from her repulsive manner to Frederick, I feared that she knew of some defect in his disposition or temper, which made her disapprove of him for Matilda, observing, that if it was so, she should lose no time in communicating it, as Matilda's attachment daily seemed to gain strength.'

'Matilda loves him—he deserves it; I know she loves him,' she replied, in a voice, whose thrilling solemnity still vibrates on my ear.

"Her manner again awakened my anxiety to discover whether there was any truth in my idea of her being unhappily attached—'Selina,' I said, 'I fear you

also love, and less happily than your sister.'

"Never did I see her so agitated; starting from me, while every fibre trembled, she almost shrieked the inquiry—'Why?'

"Finding by my answer that my suspicions had not fallen on the right object, she became perfectly composed, but remained wrapt in thought—'Mrs. Seymour,' she then said, 'since you have observed me so far, I believe it would strengthen and support me to confide in you; but never can my heart know this relief, until you have bound yourself never to betray me. If I am dear to you—if you love my angel Matilda, and the memory of her blessed mother—if you esteem the excellence of Percy, you will never betray me. I may then confide in you—may I not?' she added, with one of her natural smiles of fascinating endearment. I promised solemnly, not even to my husband, to repeat one word she uttered.

"She then told me, that her heart had

been devoted to Frederick Percy from her first memory, but that she did not know how much dearer he was to her, than all the world beside, until the moment of separation; and she was almost angry with herself, that she felt this separation even more than the danger to her beloved mother's life which occasioned it. This sentiment, she said, might possibly have shielded her feelings from the observation of others. His promise of writing to her was the only recollection which could soothe her at parting.

“ Week after week, when they were settled in France, her heart palpitated at every return of the messenger from the post-office, and often, she said, she was scarcely able to read my letters and Mr. Seymour's, from the agitation of finding that only we had written to her. Once she had given up all thought of hearing from him; her attention, which had been partly divided by him, was all turned to her parents and sister; and when Mrs. Hamilton died, all her care became to soothe

the affliction of her father, and prevent Matilda suffering by the loss. But in the different capitals which they visited before their return home, her thoughts were forced back to Frederick ; every suitor who offered himself forced on her a comparison between his character, and that she so devotedly admired. Wounded delicacy, in having fancied herself beloved where she was not, prevented her confessing her sentiments even to her who knew every other movement of her heart—‘ But through all my conflicts,’ she said, ‘ Matilda was my unconscious comforter ; from the moment of her birth, I loved her with the fondest tenderness—even before it, I had looked forward to her existence with anticipated delight. She was consigned to me by her sainted mother in her last moments ; duty and natural affection bound my kindest feelings towards her, and at every hour of her life, I have felt that if no such ties existed, she would have been the chosen friend of my heart. I have almost vowed to devote myself to her ; while

she is happy, I shall be so; my own fate is as nothing in my eyes, when compared with hers. I shall see him as her husband—try to love him as such. No, never shall her heart be rent by the consciousness of the pangs which have torn mine, and I shall be supported through all. There is my hope—there is my trust, my stay, my confidence.

“ Her heaven-illuminated countenance, her lofty form, as she raised her fair hand and pointed upwards, the white drapery which floated around her, the light which seemed diffused over her whole figure—all was to me almost supernatural; I gazed on her, almost expecting to see her raised to the skies. Crossing her snowy hands upon her breast, she remained for several minutes engaged in silent devotion; then turning to me, she said—‘ In myself I am very weak; my most earnest wish is, that he should no farther delay—her heart is his: yet this evening, when he was about to declare all that I desire, I could not hear it; when he speaks to my father, I

shall rejoice; but I could not hear him plead with me for my influence with another. Oh, my Matilda! Heaven will bless you, and I live but in you."

Overcome by sad and tender recollections, Mrs. Seymour desired her husband to continue.

"When we joined that evening at tea, Selina's appearance, calm and self-collected, led me to no suspicion that my wife had even agitated her by making the intended inquiry; on the contrary, with apparent cheerfulness, she rejoiced us all; either she had derived consolation from having disclosed her sorrow to a sympathising friend, or she had received from Heaven farther strength to work her purpose. Her poor father fondly remarked her placid cheerfulness, saying, he had almost feared she was getting ill; and Matilda, though herself more out of spirits than I ever saw her, smiled with delight at the revival in her sister's look and manner.

"The next morning, when I was sitting with Mr. Hamilton in his study, Selina

entered. Never, I think, was the expression of heaven so bright on any human face, as on hers at that moment—it was such as a painter might have chosen to personify Devotion. She slowly advanced, and placing her hand in Mr. Hamilton's, she said—‘ I consider Mr. Seymour as a second father both to Matilda and me—so I may freely speak before him.’

“ She then related, that ‘ Matilda had the preceding evening confessed to her, with tears, that she loved Frederick Percy much—much more dearly than she had thought possible, for that she found herself almost as much attached to him, as to the sister who had been every thing to her from infancy, and that she only knew it from the agony she endured that evening, when the idea had occurred to her that he would have spoken ere this, had he loved her as she was taught to believe.’

‘ But, my love,’ said Mr. Hamilton, ‘ did you not assure her that he only delays, until he feels more certainty of acceptance?’ “

‘ I did,’ replied Selina; ‘ but I think you might, with perfect delicacy, communicate to Mrs. Percy that you have reason to believe his attachment returned.’

“ As she spoke, the door opened, and Frederick Percy entered, with a countenance of the deepest dejection, and deadly pale; but the moment he saw Selina, he flushed highly. Seating himself near Mr. Hamilton, he said, in a low and tremulous voice—‘ I have, I fear, intruded; but this evening I leave B——. I am going for a short time to my friend lord Dellaville’s, the companion of my travels, which perhaps we may resume together, without my returning here. May I not once more see Matilda?’

‘ You may, you may, indeed,’ said Mr. Hamilton; ‘ but, dear Frederick, you need not go.’

“ Selina arose, and in a firm voice she said—‘ I trust, Mr. Percy, nothing I said occasions your departure? I believe that all your hopes, all your wishes, may be

gratified; far from objecting, there is no one,' (here her voice became less steady) there is no one I feel so worthy of the happiness you aspire to.'

'Miss Hamilton!' Percy exclaimed, reddening with indignation, 'do you mean to insult me?'

"Her father looked at him, while tears filled his venerable eyes—'No, son of my heart!' he said; 'Selina rejoices to say, that you have won the affection you sought—Matilda is yours.'

'Impossible!' cried Frederick.

'Not impossible,' said Mr. Hamilton, with a benevolent smile.

'Frederick,' said Selina, with a firmness to which, since I know all, I have looked back with wonder, 'you have imagined me averse to your hopes—therefore you may take my word, Matilda's heart is yours.'

"He repeated the name 'Matilda!' hurried to the window, pressed his hand on his eyes, and rushed from the house, overpowered, as we supposed, by an excess of joy, which some fancied coldness on her

part had rendered unexpected. Selina looked after him, laid her hand on her breast, smiled, though with an expression of peculiar seriousness, and soon withdrew.

‘What a creature is that,’ exclaimed her fond father, ‘so above this world, yet so tenderly, so deeply interested in the temporal happiness of another! I see,’ he continued, ‘that while she rejoices in the fair prospects of happiness opening to our precious darling, her heart bleeds at the resignation of her own rights in her.’

“I ascribed her emotions to the same cause, saying, that she had all a mother’s feelings for Matilda, and hers was an early age to be called on to give up her child in marriage. Thus we went on, seeing things through the medium of a previous impression, and blind to the truth, until it burst on us in thunder.

“Frederick did not reappear until the next morning, and the evening passed, as Mr. Hamilton told me, in much unexpressed anxiety at his absence under the circumstances. On his arrival, however,

it appeared that he had wished to make arrangements with his father, before he declared his sentiments to Mr. Hamilton.

“ From this time, every thing went on smoothly in the usual course, except that Selina was evidently suffering under a preying fever, apparently occasioned by cold, and that her spirits were uneven; she would sometimes sit in company mute, motionless, and pale; sometimes she assumed a false cheerfulness, and sometimes a visible flutter pervaded her manner; any thing remarkable, however, in these respects, was only occasional; in general, her demeanour was placid and collected.

“ Matilda, in all the bustle of nuptial preparation, and in the happy engagement of many hours daily with her lover, never for a moment forgot the indisposition of Selina; she watched over her with all the tender care of a nurse—with all the fondling endearment of a playful child. Poor, lovely, unconscious innocent!—glorious, high-minded Selina! what a fate was yours!

“ The only thing which cast a shade over the felicity of Matilda, was the want of affection she frequently observed between her lover and sister, and often she would sportively place Selina’s hand in his, and say—‘ Frederick, if you are my lover, you must be her brother, and I would really cast you off for your coldness to her, only that for once Selina is in fault herself.’ Sometimes also I have heard her more seriously inquire from each, what was the cause of their dislike of the other? Selina always answered that she had given the best proof of her esteem for Percy, in entrusting to him the happiness of her Matilda, and he would, with an attempt to smile, assure his bride, that far from disliking, he felt the highest respect and admiration for her sister.

‘ Then why do you not love each other?’ I remember my poor Matilda once said. ‘ But my heart, equally divided between you, shall form a strong link of friendship, and then I shall have nothing—nothing in the whole world to wish for.’

“ I have before observed, that I suspected an unfortunate attachment to be the cause of Selina’s depression. It was during this interval it first glanced into my mind, that Frederick was the object of it. Urged by almost paternal affection, I asked her, as my Jane had done, to inform me, as a friend, whether she had formed, during her visit to her aunt, an attachment for any individual disagreeable to her father? Blushing highly, and looking much agitated, she asked me, what in her manner could have given rise to such an idea? I answered, only her appearance of dejection.

‘ Be assured then,’ she solemnly said, ‘ that with my aunt I never saw any one who could please me for more than the moment. You could not expect me to be in particularly-good spirits, when I am going to lose Matilda; but surely I am always composed—always cheerful; they did not remark my dejection?’

“ This question she again repeated, and with an emotion which for a moment

shocked me with the tremendous idea; but when I next saw her in his company, I closely observed her, and her placid countenance, her self-collected manner, completely deceived me. It was strange!

“ So vehemently did Frederick hurry the preparations, that little more than a week elapsed between the day of his declaration and that of his marriage. On the eve of that most memorable day, he brought his bride, while Mrs. Seymour and I were alone with her, a magnificent veil of foreign lace, as a nuptial gift. Matilda displayed it to Mrs. Seymour, admiring its uncommon beauty, and looking up at Percy, she said, smiling—‘ You wish to please me—do you not?’

‘ My whole life,’ he energetically exclaimed, ‘ shall be devoted to your gratification.’

“ She laughed, and answered—‘ Well, I do not want your life now, only your veil.’

‘ The veil is yours, my Matilda.’

‘ No,’ she said, ‘ but yours, dear Frede-

rick, and you will give it to Selina, enclosed in a letter.'

"He stammered some apology—if she would present it, for Miss Hamilton's dislike of him made him at a loss how to write. After a pause, Matilda said, 'she feared Selina did not love him as she would wish; but she would dictate a letter, in which he should enclose it, and give it after the ceremony.' I remember the very words he wrote by her direction; and, oh! I remember her, my lovely child—the playful smile of her lip—her pretty head, cast up in thought—her fair form, as she leaned over him. The words, I think, were these:—

'May I claim the right of a brother, to entreat Selina's acceptance of a gift, which, before I could plead that relationship, I would not venture to offer——' She paused here, and with an arch smile continued—'As more than a sister, however, I regard Selina, since to her instructions, her care and tenderness, I principally owe all the virtues I love in my Matilda, which

will, I trust, make the future happiness of my life.'

" Matilda coloured at my smile, and blushingly she said—' I know Selina is only susceptible of flattery through me, and he would not love me so much, if he did not think me good—so it is scarcely vanity.'

" Oh, my dear, dear child !" exclaimed Mr. Seymour, bursting into tears, which, though he struggled with them, long disabled him from proceeding. His emotion seemed to throw the sympathising stranger into agony. He at length continued.

" Just as he was folding the letter, before he had directed it, Matilda's little bird, which she had freed from its cage to fly about the room, perched on his hand ; he arose to place it on her hair, and thus omitted addressing the letter, which he put into his pocket. How trivial was this incident, yet what fatal circumstances resulted from it ! I should mention, that my wife and I remained in the house during the wedding preparations.

“ For the early part of this evening, Selina’s manner was unlike what I had ever seen it ; usually, like a being of a superior order, she remained calm and collected, while all around her were fluttered, and her heavenly mind was visible in the merest trifles, enabling her to pass unruffled, untouched, through the most teasing worldly cares, as it taught her to bear with resignation and fortitude the heaviest earthly sorrows. Now, on the contrary, she alone was fluttered ; she entered into all the little minutiae of preparation with trembling agitation ; but soon recovering herself, she left the room. She had attempted too much.

“ Her father remarked, that he feared she was ill and feverish, for never from infancy up, had he seen her discomposed. Mrs. Seymour, who, as I mentioned, was the confidante of her fatal secret, forbore to accompany her, aware of the holy purpose which caused her absence ; but Matilda, who had always, like a child, followed Selina’s steps, soon went to seek her.

Quickly returning, while tears glistened in her sparkling eyes, she informed us that Selina's door was bolted, but that from a few sounds which had escaped, she knew she was engaged in prayer for her. In a few minutes Selina re-entered, more than herself. Oh! had you seen her, sir, for description must indeed fail of giving you an idea of the blessed serenity of her pale but heaven-lighted countenance! Confident am I, to this hour, that some vision of angels had appeared to her—it was more—far, far more than human. Matilda threw her pretty arms around her, and tears of tender love and gratitude flowed from her eyes upon her sister's bosom.

Mr. Hamilton desired them to retire for the night, as both seemed to require rest; and when he gave his parting blessing to his kneeling Matilda, saying, it was the last time he should ever bless Matilda Hamilton, Selina also sunk on her knees, and the words, 'bless me, even me also, oh, my father!' burst from her quivering lips. Mr. Hamilton did so with the most

solemn ardour, and when, both impressing a parting kiss on the lips of each of their friends, they left the room, he said—‘ I felt equal agitation in giving my nightly blessing to both, for Selina’s heart seems rent at the loss of our darling, as much as Matilda’s is agitated by the event of to-morrow.’ He then wished once more to assure his Selina that Matilda would still be hers—that Percy, far from depriving them of Matilda, would be a dear addition to the family ; but Mrs. Seymour, with an eagerness I could not account for, entreated him not to agitate himself and them by a second parting for the night ; she feared that these assurances would only farther torture Selina’s feelings, and perhaps overcome her self-command.

“ Mr. Hamilton then spoke of his equally-precious children. He said, for his sweet Matilda, he felt only agitation, but no anxiety ; but he was alarmed for the constitution of his sacred, treasured Selina, by seeing her health so much affected by her feelings ; yet though he said he felt

no *anxiety* for Matilda, his last words, as we entered our separate apartments were—
 “To-morrow is an awful day—pray that it may be a happy one!” I know not whether this feeling was of an ominous nature, or that he felt something he could not account for, or explain, in the manners of Frederick.

“Next morning, Selina was the first who appeared at our door to hasten us; Matilda was entirely dressed by her, and in the arrangement of her hair, Mrs. Seymour, with wonder, saw that not only Selina’s hands had been busied, but her taste exercised. I well remember that her beautiful auburn hair was adorned with white roses; it was from that day she contracted such a passion for them, as to be really more happy while they are in season than at other times; it was those roses, sir, she this evening strewed on the grave of her father and sister. Oh! never did I see my pretty child look so very lovely as that day! As I was to perform the service, I was in the church before them; but at this

moment the gaily-adorned procession seems to move before my aged eyes: Matilda glowing in bright hope of felicity, trembling at the awful ceremony before her, blushing at the universal gaze, and resting her shrinking form on the supporting arm of her sister: Selina's steady, solemn step, her lofty air, her calm, collected countenance, her dark uplifted eyes, her snowy paleness—oh, sir! she looked like an angel sent to bless the nuptials of a favourite charge, yet ready to reascend to her native heaven: The changeful countenance of the venerable father—his look of doting tenderness, of doubtful, tremulous joy—the gay, airy figure of Anna Percy, as she walked on the other side of Matilda—the pleasure-lighted smiles of her mother, the look of my wife towards Selina, seeming to express almost the veneration of idolatry—her smile of fond congratulation, as she looked at the bride, mingling with an expression of sadness, to me unaccountable, until another glance towards Selina pressed on my mind, with more force than ever,

the idea which had once before occurred to it: The train of female friends and domestics of both families, of whom the sweet bride was the universal darling, gay or serious pleasure speaking on each face, according to the different characters—all—all I see as if it had occurred but yesterday. In the other aisle Frederick Percy advanced, surrounded, in the same manner, by the young men of the neighbourhood, and accompanied by his father. His face it was impossible to read; a fixed intensity of feeling absorbed all expression. As they approached the altar, the moment he came within reach of his bride, he seized her hand with an abrupt vehemence, while he uttered, in a low but solemn and energetic tone, the words—‘ Dearest! most beloved!’ I could scarcely account for the deep, unusual solemnity I felt in pronouncing the awful charge with which the service opens; the pause which followed it was lengthened by this emotion. Matilda raised her innocent face, as if doubtful whether I required an answer, and

Frederick threw up his eyes to heaven, with an expression which I afterwards understood to be that of devoutly offering up the sacrifice of every sentiment which his conscience could consider an impediment to the union he was about to form. His part of the service Frederick pronounced in a manner, which I have heard many who were present say, impressed them with the idea of peculiar piety ; none can doubt that the firm intention of his heart was to have tenderly fulfilled the vows of protecting love he that day pledged."

The stranger, whose face had been for some time buried in his arms, here raised his head, and fixed his eyes for a moment on Mr. Seymour, with an expression of benignity and affection, then resumed his former posture.

" At the conclusion of the ceremony," resumed Mr. Seymour, " he held her in a long embrace, casting up his eyes rather in prayer than in thanksgiving ; then resigning her to her father, kissed Selina, and called her his dear sister, with an ease and

freedom of manner, which I have ever looked back to with pleasure, as a proof that his noble heart was free of the guilt of a double love. Selina smiled brightly and naturally: all was over—the sacrifice was completed; she saw those happy whom her warm heart most dearly loved, and she was happy too—not a struggle or a regret remained; all that she had loved and regretted in Percy for herself, she now loved and rejoiced in for her sister. We returned to the house. Shall I go on, sir?”

The stranger firmly answered—“Certainly, and fully and minutely.”

Mr. Seymour continued—“All was peace in the breasts of this fated family; but the affection which has been cherished into a part of existence, mingled with every feeling and every habit from the first dawn of intelligence, no effort can eradicate—the branches may be lopped, but the root remains. Towards the close of the entertainment, at which all the guests were assembled, Selina being about

to leave the room, Frederick followed her to the door, and put into her hand the letter which had been prepared the preceding evening. By what he said, she understood it to be a present, and I heard her cheerfully say, as she cordially gave him her hand, that she would value it as his gift. These last words I ever heard her utter—that last smile that ever illumined her beautiful features, removed from my mind all the gloomy forebodings of the morning.

“ Matilda was for some time engaged in conversation with Mrs. Percy ; but as soon as she could leave her, according to her usual custom, she moved to follow Selina. Her father interrupted her passage to the door, and laughingly told her, that now she was a wife, she must give up her infantine habits. He placed her hand in that of Frederick, who, fondly pressing her to his heart, said—‘ You must now learn to follow me, my Matilda.’ My precious child ! how lovely was the blushing pleasure which then smiled on her innocent

countenance! Again he pressed her to him, and said—‘ But go, my love. Never shall I detain you from the dear sister who has made you what you are—go——’ and as he relinquished her hand, she playfully smiled on him, and disappeared.

“ Mr. Hamilton had but just uttered a few words in praise of the dear treasure he had that day bestowed on him, when a piercing shriek called us to the apartment of the sisters. The lifeless form of Selina lay extended on the ground; Matilda stood near her, the chill, pale statue of despair, as if the sight had struck her to marble, not even leaving the power of offering aid.

“ For some minutes I cannot tell what passed. Both my wife and I were occupied in placing Selina on the bed, and trying to discover whether life remained. The physician, who had been of the bridal party, found it was fled for ever, but, with great presence of mind, endeavoured to persuade those around her that it might

be only a temporary suspension of the faculties.

“ An open letter lay on the floor. Mrs. Percy took it up, in the hope that by discovering the cause of her illness, some means of relief might be found. I know not how it came into Matilda’s hand, or its contents to her knowledge.

“ After some vain efforts, made rather to postpone the avowal of the truth than in any hope of reviving Selina, doctor Weldon turned all his attention to Matilda, called on by those next her, who were terrified at her immoveable stillness; all her faculties seemed stunned and annihilated.

“ I sought for Percy, but he was nowhere to be found. In scenes like these, it is impossible to see accurately what passes; but I think I have some indistinct recollection of Frederick rushing wildly past me in the first terrific moments.

“ The doctor wished her to be removed to another room; but the first attempt to this purpose seemed to recall her to life—

she sprung towards the bed, and having reached it, stood motionless, as before. All were then ordered to withdraw, except two young friends, whose flowing tears, it was hoped, might excite hers; those of my wife and Anna were chilled by horror; she continued still, and apparently senseless; they caressed sometimes her, and sometimes the lifeless form of her lately so dear to all. This she seemed only to observe when they obscured her view of it. They spoke of Percy; she shrieked, but answered not; all they could do was vain. The nurse, who had attended first Selina, and afterwards herself, was called in.

“ Matilda looked at her as she entered, pointed to the face of her sister, but remained silent.

“ The good nurse drew a chair, so as to command a view of that form she had once so fondly gazed on, and seating herself there, she drew Matilda on her knees. She continued in the same state of lifeless

torpor for more than two hours. As the light began to fail, she drew nearer, and at length slowly pronounced the word—
‘Light.’

“It was procured for her; and soon after, doctor Weldon, who had been engaged with her father, thinking that any effect of added affliction must be preferable to her present state, entered the chamber of death. He took her hand—

Matilda,’ he said, ‘your father is ill. Look at Selina; not now can she fly on his summons. You are his only comfort.’

‘Am I?’ she said, vaguely, and rising instantly, she accompanied him.

“Mr. Hamilton had lived but in his children; the strong mind, the tenderness of Selina, had been the stay on which he rested; the playfulness, the soft vivacity of Matilda, had been as the vital spring of life. Both were now lost, and the hapless father sunk with them.—‘Oh, where,’ he exclaimed, ‘where is my sainted child, to pour the heavenly balm of her mild

spirit on my wounded heart? where is my lovely soother, my sportive darling, in this hour of deepest woe?"

"As the moving statue of Matilda was led in, he stretched out his arms to receive her; but while his tears flowed abundantly on her pale cold cheek, not one responsive drop softened her glazed eyes; yet repeatedly and tenderly she kissed him; and seating herself on his bed, she watched him with the most attentive care, perfectly remembering all that had been done for him in former illness, and rising herself for all within the room; but sometimes with movements alarmingly rapid, sometimes slowly, as if she forgot the object of her search. Her pale lips moved often as she looked at me, but she seemed to have lost the power of speech.

"At two o'clock in the morning, doctor Weldon announced to me that he had no hope of Mr. Hamilton; that he thought a few hours, at most, would unite his soul to that of his blessed Selina. It was when this came to Matilda's knowledge

she first spoke ; throwing her arms around him, she leaned her head on the pillow, and exclaimed, in the sweetest tone of persuasion—‘ Oh, papa, you will not leave your own little Matilda after you !’

“ He grasped her hand, and trying once more to press his lips to hers, he expired. She remained for several minutes in the same position, doctor Weldon not permitting her to be disturbed. At length she rose, and leaving the room, returned to that of Selina ; here again she laid herself beside the corpse, and kissing her forehead, she said, in allusion to Percy’s last words—‘ I know I shall never be detained from her ;’ then looking, with a farewell smile, at me, she dropped her cheek on Selina’s, and again closing her eyes, lay still and silent. Again she arose, and returned to her father, looked at him, went back to Selina, and exclaimed—‘ And I live still ! Oh, Selina !’

“ The whole remainder of the night she continued wandering between the two rooms, by turns laying herself beside each,

with her cheek pressed to theirs; and sometimes she remained so long in this position, that we hoped she had fallen into a dose. In the morning she seemed to have a more distinct idea of the sufferings of death; for, as she stood gazing on Selina, she would repeatedly exclaim—
‘ Did she suffer? did she suffer?’

“ Doctor Weldon assured her that her breath had escaped without a pang; and looking up at him, with a smile, she asked—‘ Will mine do so soon?’

“ Frequently, through this night of horror, I heard her whisper into that ear which would no longer delight in her sweet harmonious accents, soft reproaches that she was left so long—‘ Oh, Selina, she said, ‘ you gratified me in every thing—you taught me to live only with you, and now you have forgotten me!’

“ Finding her likely to continue in the same state, I left her to the care of Mrs. Seymour; while I went to Percy Abbey, that family having left the house early in the preceding day, without my know-

ledge. I was most anxious to make inquiries about Frederick, but the shrieks of Matilda, whenever he was named, deterred me until I could leave her. He was indeed gone, leaving a note for Anna, the words of which I remember—

Beloved Anna, farewell! You are now my parents' only child; but do not fear suicide!

“ This little note, sir, lady Dellaville preserves with care, and never mentions her lost brother without tears; her eldest son, sir, bears his name.

“ But to continue.—Mrs. Percy gave me some idea of the contents of the letter, which she had begun to read, when some one drew it from her; but indeed the poor mother was too much horror-struck to give a distinct account of any thing. When I returned to the parsonage, I got the letter from Matilda, into whose possession it had fallen, by some means still unknown. Would you wish to hear it, sir?”

“ Yes, all—every thing,” replied the

stranger, in a voice which emotion rendered scarcely audible.

“First, sir,” resumed Mr. Seymour, “I ought to tell you that, from his servant Harrison, who, till his death, remembered his young master with grateful affection, we learned the fatal accident which brought this letter to Selina’s hands. The night, or rather morning of his marriage, when Harrison obeyed the summons of his bell, he found him pacing the apartment in the most vehement agitation. Two sealed letters lay on the table; he hastily addressed one to lord Dellaville, desiring Harrison to put it in the post-office; and when Harrison inquired, should he take the other also, he answered—‘No, I will give it myself—it is a present.’ He then directed it to Miss Hamilton.

“The letter, with the veil, reached lord Dellaville; the other Selina. Now I will read it, sir—

‘You ask me why do I marry this lovely angelic being, while my heart

is devoted to her sister? It is the last time I can open my heart to you; to-morrow will seal my lips for ever on the subject. You know how I loved Selina—how I looked up to her, idolized her, though her cruel neglect of my letters had added indignation to the dreadful conviction that my attachment was unreturned: you know with what agony I obeyed my father's summons to B——, where I was to meet, estranged from me, an object so long—so fondly cherished: you know what my feelings were—how agitated, how desponding!—but I cherished some feelings, uncommunicated even to you. Though my wounded affection led me to shun with horror the idea of meeting her, yet, when it was forced upon me—when I thought of seeing her what she was, my softened feelings admitted a ray of hope, that though she had so utterly forgotten me in her mother's illness, she might, in seeing me, feel a renewal of her early friendship. Oh, so many recollections crowded on my mind, so tender, so

soul-touching, that I felt she could not be recalled to them, without partaking somewhat of my feelings!

‘I left you, Dellaville—I expected to see her; but I was told that her father, contrary to his own wishes, had, to indulge her, consented to her leaving the country, on a visit, at the moment of my expected return. Matilda, who knew her every thought, had never heard me named. My only sister knew me but as a disobedient son. Oh, that walk! Never was this heart rent with such anguish; every hope was blasted—every feeling outraged! yet, in that very hour, my heart was as devotedly hers as ever. I gazed on Matilda, her pupil, her child, her idol, resembling her, I thought, in every feature. I heard the thrilling tones of her voice—those tones so impressed on my heart as the tones of Selina. You have said that I am proud to a faulty degree. Was this my pride, Dellaville?

‘At the moment when I had learned that she had forgotten my existence, I

hung with rapture on every word, every look of Matilda, for her sake. I was constantly at her side. I delighted to engage her in conversation—to hear the sweet sentiments instilled by her sister. Often it was on my lips to open to Matilda my whole heart; but I drew back—I feared that she too would spurn me for having dared to aspire to the affections of Selina. Often have you accused me of too great reserve. You only know that the heart of the cold unfeeling Frederick Percy burns with the most glowing ardour; you only know that he who has been ever considered the most stoically immoveable of men, possesses a sensibility too, too susceptible; you only know this, because, till lately, you only loved me. Selina knew it once; but it is forgotten now.

‘Dellaville, do not blame this suppression of my feelings. To whom should they be communicated? My parents, proud of my boasted talents, thought only of them, and overlooked my heart; Anna was too young to enter into my feelings;

Selina knew them all—to her I confided every thought—she I made my partner soul—and she deserted me! My heart was chilled and driven in. Often when the excellent Mr. Seymour has kindly inquired the cause of my depression, I have been almost tempted to confide in him. But can you wonder that this heart, betrayed by the only human being who knew all its intricacies, should not be ready to open itself to another? You, Dellaville, my dearest, best friend—you won upon it; the heart you gained, you preserved. Through years of suffering you have been my steady guide, my gentle comforter, my patient hearer, and with you I have ever been candid.

‘ Matilda I considered as a beautiful fascinating child, who seemed inclined to sympathise with me. I fondly, tenderly loved her as such. As such, when I gazed on her open brow, her smile of truth, her blush of sensibility, I thought that to her, the cherished darling of my beloved, I might speak with confidence; but so look-

ed Selina. Such was the cordial affection of her manner towards me—such the smile that banished all reserve: yet, when in my first letter I opened all my heart, she deigned not to notice it. Again I wrote, implored her pardon for having so far betrayed my feelings, and entreated her to write to me as a friend, to inform me of the state of her mother's health; but the offence was not to be forgiven; and should I repeat it through Matilda? No, I was silent; not even Anna entertained a suspicion of the truth. Was I too weak? I will confess to you now, that after all I had heard—all I had seen, my heart trembled within me, the day I was to meet her, with an agitation which only some lingering hope could have inspired. I dared to hope that in her manner there would be something of correspondent emotion; but the first moment I was undeceived. She entered the room, glowing in a brilliancy of beauty which all said was peculiar in her to uncommon cheerfulness. She rejoiced in being restored.

to her sister, her father, and Anna, and remembered not that she was to see the presumptuous Percy, until Matilda pronounced my name. She advanced with an extended hand. Never, never can I forget it. There was sufficient kindness to convince me that my offence was forgotten—sufficient coldness to prove that she had no recollection of early attachment. Her father said I did not seem glad to see her. I know not what I answered, but I turned to Matilda, and drew her away, to seem as if my presumptuous heart had not dared to feel even agitation. Selina embraced and kissed my sister, rejoiced to be released from my presence.

‘As the mistress of the house, it was my place to attend her to the dinner-table. I thought I might do so, but I was repulsed.

‘Matilda was to me a sweet resource from all the embarrassment of my situation; and sometimes the deep yet lively intelligence of her mind could even calm its bitterer feelings.

‘ For some days a cold prevented her singing; but at length, to gratify Matilda, she sung. At that moment I dreaded that my feelings would be betrayed. I trembled; but struggling with my emotion, I uttered not a word, not knowing what to do. Dreading again to hear her voice, I called on Matilda for a favourite song. She was angry at my rudeness towards her sister. Sweet child! how I felt to love her! But this heart tenaciously clung to hope, in spite of reason. The tremor of Selina’s voice, I dared to hope, might have been caused by recollection of the last time she sung for me; and her paleness, her languor, all in that blissful moment, I ventured to attribute to feelings which never—no, never existed. My heart opened; thrown off my guard, I uttered some words of how far my happiness depended on her. I know not what they were, but I well remember her answer—“ That is a more important trust, sir, than I desire to be honoured with.”

‘ It recalled me to myself—it iced every

feeling she wished to be annihilated. Yes, I joined her in common conversation.

‘ That night I wrote to you, my dearest friend, to tell you that I would join you immediately. The next day I went to the parsonage to take leave. I hoped not to see her; but I could not bear to leave the country without bidding farewell to the venerable Mr. Hamilton and my sweet Matilda. Selina was in the study; *she* informed me that Matilda’s love was mine; *she* said that the union was one she approved. To hear that I was beloved by this lovely, inestimable Matilda—to hear it from *her* lips, I know not what I said or did. Matilda was yet dearer to me than my own sister; had not my heart been irrevocably engaged, it had been hers; but until that moment I had never considered her other than as a child—a child who had won on my fondest affection—who had become dearer to me than any object on earth, save one alone. I loved her nearly as much as I love you, and with a more endearing tenderness. But, far from any

self-appropriating attachment, I often wished that my beloved Dellaville had such a wife as Matilda — my beloved Matilda such a husband as Dellaville. But you, who have been a cherished son, who have been reared as the idol of all around you, you cannot fully comprehend the power of love over a heart repulsed and chilled like mine. You cannot imagine the revulsion of my feelings, when I learned that I was the first object of Matilda Hamilton's invaluable affection.

‘The root of a first love strikes so deep, that it can never be wholly eradicated; its branches twine round every fibre of the heart, and even when withered, still retain their hold. This I am aware of, but yet fear nothing for the happiness of Matilda. Perhaps I do not love her as I might have loved Selina, had she been mine; but conscious of her love for me, conscious how much her happiness must depend on me, she is certainly dearer to my heart than Selina now is.

‘Morning dawns: this sun will see me

the husband of Matilda Hamilton. Never again can my heart be fully open even to you. To be beloved by Matilda—to be confident of her attachment, and yet not happy! In her, every other thought might be confided. Oh that she had been as a sister, the dear partaker of sorrows lightened by her sympathy! What a fate is mine! the only human being, except you, who love me sufficiently to enter into my feelings, must never know them! But again I repeat, dear Dellaville, do not fear for her. No, at the altar I will resign every feeling her husband ought not to entertain. Precious, precious creature! if you knew her, you would feel how impossible it is that my devoted tenderness for her should ever be deficient. Adieu, dearest Dellaville!

‘ Though I have thus dwelt on my past feelings, I trust I may now say that I am happy. My love for Selina is like a dear, though painful vision, faded from my sight; while that for my Matilda smiles on me with promises of lasting felici-

ty. Yet I feel a strange terror of the coming day. I will try to sleep. You will be enchanted with my Matilda—when shall I introduce you to her? I have already bespoken for you a high place in her regard. I do not now dread any recollections connected with your appearance. Truly, my dearest Dellaville, could you win upon Selina's love, I should rejoice to see you blessed with her. I now only regard her as the guardian angel of my Matilda, interested in me for her dear sake. Come to me, my dearest friend. Adieu!

F. P.

“The perusal of this letter,” continued Mr. Seymour, “left no farther doubt of the cause of Selina's death. She was happy in the confidence that her Matilda and he were so, and at the first words, suddenly convincing her that Frederick was even more wretched than she had been, and that Matilda would possess only a divided affection, her heart was rent in twain.

The flight of Percy too was now too well accounted for.

“ When I returned to the parsonage, I found that Matilda had gone to the church-yard, accompanied by my wife, who was desired by the physician to gratify every wish, to fix, as my Jane found, when they reached it, on the spot where her father and sister should be laid. The whole seemed to have burst on her mind in the moment she first saw Selina lifeless ; for, incapable of receiving any new idea, all connected with them she perfectly understood, and seemed prepared for. I had feared that the funerals would be a new shock to her ; but it was now evident that the idea was at once connected with that of their death.

“ When she had fixed on one spot, because it was nearest the church, she said— ‘ But no—there is no space for me beside it.’ Afterwards she sent herself to the school founded by Selina, to desire that all the children might attend her to the

grave—‘ That she may have,’ she said, ‘ a tomb of orphan’s tears wept over her— orphan!’ The word seemed to vibrate on her ear; and as she repeated it, with a heavy sigh, she impressively added— ‘ Mine are orphan’s tears, and they would relieve me—but that is no matter now.’

“ Most of that night she continued, as before, wandering between the two apartments, and gazing first at one, then at the other. The name of Percy had not yet been uttered.

“ Early the following morning the physicians sent for from London arrived, and gave it as their opinion that Matilda’s case was incurable, the brain having received an injury from the shock, in some of the delicate fibres, which no art could repair; but at the same time they gave us the satisfaction of assuring us, that the same cause prevented her feeling the affliction with the intensity of which her mind, in a sane state, would have been capable. Indulgence, even in what might to us appear

calculated to increase her sorrow, was prescribed as the only means of preserving her in a calm and placid state.

“ The day when the funerals were to take place, she remained all the morning in Selina’s room. My wife was shocked at the idea of her seeing the body removed ; but in the course of the day she said herself that they must go now.—‘ But first papa,’ she said, ‘ for she must go between them.’

“ As the coffin was carried down the staircase, she stood at the top, her countenance still, and her whole form motionless. I had hoped that this scene of touching woe might have melted her to tears ; but no, while every other eye was dissolved in heartfelt sorrow, hers remained dry and void. She watched until the coffin had been placed in the hall, and then, returning, she gazed for a moment on that which contained all the earthly remains of Selina ; now, for the first time, her countenance in some degree expressed

her feelings, and she laid her hand on her heart, as if some of the dreadful pressure had been softened by tender emotion; but soon resuming all her stillness, she said—‘ Now,’ and suffered it to be removed. When the mournful train began to move on, she cried—‘ No—no, there is another!’ She returned into each apartment, and looked wildly around, but stopping in that where her sister had been laid, she exclaimed—‘ Frederick, surely you will follow her? You cannot stay for me now,’ and she continued her search, frequently calling on his name. ‘ Frederick, she is gone. Why—why do you delay?’

“ Some confused idea then took possession of her mind, of an uncertainty whether she herself yet lived; but as the evening approached, she became more composed. Holding my wife’s hand and mine, she stood gazing on the sky, and when the setting sun first struck her eyes, she exclaimed, with one of her brightest smiles of delight—‘ There, heaven is open

now! I shall see them all; she promised it.' She then flew towards the door, but returning, called Selina's dog to accompany her. 'Come see her again, Fidele,' she said, 'and cry no more.' Bounding along the way to the churchyard, she stopped at the entrance, and said—'Be solemn here, Fidele—here I entered gaily *once*. It is an awful place.' Kneeling on the new-made grave, she raised her beautiful eyes to heaven, and continued several minutes in silent thanksgiving, as the lustre of her countenance indicated.

"The grave had already been strewed with white roses, as the double emblem of the youthful purity and spotless sanctity of those who rested there. Matilda pressed them, one after another, to her lips, in a low voice murmuring—'They were my bridal ornaments once—now they are hers. She is wedded to Heaven—I must be so too; and these, sacred as they now are, shall adorn my new bridal. I too shall be devoted to things above.' Then:

laying her fair head on the grave, she shed the first tears which had relieved her grief-stricken heart.

“ Oh, what a sight was this ! There lay entombed in earth the venerable father and the lovely child, who, a few days before, had, with joint energy, sought to shield all sorrow from those who could now only pay the sad tribute of their tears ; there lay, in silent dust, that perfect form, whose fairer spirit no longer gave it all its highest charms ; there lay that hoary head, so lately crowned with all the brightest honours of age ; and there, too lost to reason to deplore their loss, stretched on the damp sod that covered them, lay her, but three days before their pride—their joy—the fairest—the best ! But, oh, how sad a difference ! they now, in bliss unutterable, blessed the wise end for which she was afflicted, while she——”

Mr. Seymour here interrupted himself, saying—“ These are not scenes to look back to.”

"They are scenes," said the stranger, in a hollow voice, "on which the lacerated heart delights to dwell."

Mr. Seymour continued—"Since that hour, sir, she has, every evening, at sunset, continued her visits to the grave of her father and sister; and when she talks of her death, she smilingly assures my wife and me, that when she is there, we shall see her.

"Once we took her a few miles distant, hoping it would be of use, but she seemed miserable and restless the whole evening, and we never made a second attempt. Even in rain she visits it. She objected so much to a tomb, as separating them from her, that we erected the little marble obelisk you saw, instead of one; and this, as well as the grave, she every day in summer adorns with fanciful wreaths of Selina's roses, as she calls them."

The stranger interrupted Mr. Seymour with an effort to speak, but it was long ere he regained the power of utterance;

at length he said—"And would the sight of any of these beloved objects—the restoration of them, bring her to her senses?"

Mr. Seymour answered—"No, it is an injury on the brain, which nothing can repair, though the sight of one might recall her to her first intensity of feeling. She is now perfectly happy; she is lost to others, but not to herself. She engages in prayer, which the most exemplary divine might find improvement in hearing; the only inconsistency being the trifles for which her devout and resigned prayers are offered. Yet they are not trifles to her; her sphere of happiness is circumscribed as that of childhood; but with the piety of mature years, and an elevated soul, she offers up to the Father of Mercies all the wants and wishes that constitute her little world. She will pray for the recovery of a sick bird, or bear its loss with pious resignation.

"The greatest trial of this nature she has known, since her derangement, was the death of Selina's dog; she felt for it,

mourned for it, but resigned it as a person of superior mind and intellect might do for a beloved fellow-creature. The return of spring brings to her a real acquisition of happiness, in the opening of the flowers, and the renewal of verdure ; she laments their departure with sorrow, but with hope, often saying, with a smile—‘ They will return again.’ And if this reflection brings to her mind a recollection of those who will return no more, the tear it excites is soon succeeded by a smile of ecstasy, while she says—‘ But I will see them this evening, and I will soon go to stay with them entirely.’

“ Nor are these the only interests which occupy and vary her life—she is not wholly lost to others ; still faded, blighted, as she is, her fond affection and endearing attentions form the chief charm of our waning existence—still her sweet song can soothe the ear of sickness, and her gentle hand can smooth its pillow ; still her disordered intellect can frame pleasures for us.

“ Oh, sir, she is as a darling child, still

in the simplicity of infancy, but with more than infantine intelligence. When, from her own desire to be gone, we force ourselves to look to her removal as a blessing, we feel that in her we resign all our highest interests in life; besides this, her thoughts, and her hands, are daily busied in works of charity. She has a little female infant school, in which she teaches herself, with much intelligence and patience; but as soon as any child has attained the age of seven, as if secretly conscious of her inability to carry her instructions farther, she dismisses her to a higher school, which she calls Selina's, and which she supports with her purse, though never with her presence. The children however, by whom she is adored, as she is by every person here, of every age and rank, often follow 'the lady,' as they call her, with entreaties that she will look at their mistress's favourable reports of their conduct, or suffer them to read to her, that she may judge of their improvement.

"The division of her time is regularly

arranged, with a mixture of reason and fancy. She rises very early, prays for a short time in her own room, then attends to the cleaning and replenishing the cages of her birds; after which she wanders in the garden, sometimes examining the flowers and buds, sometimes stopping in mental prayer, until summoned to join the family. In these morning occupations, as well as through every hour of the day and night, she is attended by the daughter of her nurse; and when health permits, by the nurse herself, both of whom love her with all the doting fondness usually given only to the endearments of infancy, and with all the deference which the ancient domestics of a family feel for their masters.

“ Her conversation with us is frequently a detail of the little incidents of the morning, respecting her birds and flowers, leading us, with caressing sweetness, to any that have particularly pleased her, and turning our steps with cautious tender-

ness, as from a painful object, from any that are faded or injured. She then attends to her school for two hours, immediately after which she goes to the parsonage-house, now inhabited by my curate's family, walks through every room, and frequently returns, without having spoken a word to any one. When returned home, she works, making clothes for the poor children, which she executes with a taste and fancy suited to higher rank. She also amuses herself in making beautiful toys, which she gives to Mrs. Seymour, and all the female friends she loved in former days, particularly lady Dellaville, whom she still calls Anna Percy.

“ When she casually heard of her marriage, she seemed much shocked, and inquired—‘ Is her father alive ?’ On being answered in the affirmative, she asked—‘ And her mother ?’ On another affirmative, she thoughtfully pressed her hand on her forehead, and said, with a sigh—‘ It is strange—unaccountable !’

“ Anna’s visits were at first frequent; but as we found they always agitated our precious charge, and left her silent and dejected, they were gradually relinquished; and then lord Dellaville removed her from scenes which pressed too heavily on her spirits, but which till then she would not quit.

“ When tired of her needle, Matilda wanders about in the gardens or fields, or accompanies Mrs. Seymour in her visits to the neighbouring poor, by whom she is regarded as a kind of superior being, towards whom an act or word of kindness is rewarded by a blessing, and from whom it is valued as a happy omen. At the approach of sunset, she repairs, as I have already mentioned, to the churchyard, and immediately on her return retires to rest.

“ This is the ordinary routine of her life, which is seldom varied, unless if either of us is ill, when she rarely leaves us, except at the well-remembered period of the year which decided her fate. On ‘the day,’ as she emphatically terms it, she lays

out on her bed the whole of her bridal attire, even the faded roses which adorned her beautiful hair, as well as the bride-maid's dress of Selina, and the white gloves of her father; these she examines and arranges; in Selina's dress, kissing with awful tenderness the parts which most nearly touched the person, and in her own, those which, in dressing her, had most required the assisting hands of Selina. She has another pair of man's gloves, selected from those which had not been worn, which she calls '*his*,' never naming the person to whom she appropriates them, and places among the articles belonging to her sister. She arranges her hair on that day herself, in the form in which Selina had dressed it, though at other times she leaves to her attendant the care of it, in which she is very particular, on account of the pride and pleasure Selina took in its uncommon beauty.

"From these days she always reserves one rose, which she keeps in a packet by themselves, as if for a memorandum of

the number of years; the last time she reckoned them over, she repeated the number 'twenty,' to which they now amount, in a tone of surprise, adding, 'and yet he is not there. At least they never shewed him to me.' She paused a while, then said — 'It is wonderful!'

"This, and the few succeeding days in every year, she seems much absorbed in thought—the little she says, always recurring to the past; at other times she scarcely ever touches on it, and is habitually serene, cheerful, and easily amused.

"The state of agitation in which you saw her this evening is quite unusual. If any new event should arouse her from her present state of tranquillity, it would be more likely to exchange it for one more troubled, than for one more happy; therefore," he added, fixing his eyes on the stranger, "if Frederick Percy lives, I hope she may never know it."

The stranger arose, and paced the apartment with unequal steps for some time, when Mrs. Seymour, kindly asking, would

he wish to retire to rest? he assented. He grasped their hands with the fervour of affection, and hastily turned away; but instantly returning, he said—"One thing more. Could you, without her knowledge, give me a lock of that precious hair?"

"I can," answered Mrs. Seymour, taking it from the same pocketbook which contained the letter—"one which she herself cut off for me."

As she placed it in his hand, an universal tremor shook his frame.

Mr. Seymour conducted him to his apartment in silence, and, as he entered it, said—"To-morrow I have much to inquire of you."

The stranger wrung his hand, and instantly closed the door.

"Surely," exclaimed Mrs. Seymour, when her husband returned, "surely you know who this is? Some parts of the sad story might have been omitted, for his sake."

"No," answered Mr. Seymour, "I saw

he wished to know all; and questions were torture to him. At first I did not know him, but attributed his emotion to affliction, which taught him sympathy."

"Do you remember," said his wife, "the interesting account my brother gave of a soldier in his regiment, whose air and manner impressed him with the idea of his belonging to a very superior rank in life—whose bravery had often exposed him to the distinction which he sedulously shunned? The regiment is now in England."

"I am convinced you are right," interrupted Mr. Seymour; "and this life of hardship has aided sorrow in changing his fine features from our remembrance."

"My brother," she rejoined, "said that this noble soldier appeared to suffer under overwhelming affliction, the nature of which, from the reserve and silent gloom of his demeanour, he conceived to be some rash action, by which he had tarnished his honour; and he was confirmed in this idea by the tears which he has often seen

fill his eyes on the eve of any desperate engagement; there was then, in his whole air and countenance, a something which told that pleasurable emotion had thawed the ice that at other times seemed to chill his heart."

"He said," added Mr. Seymour, "that the frequent animated glance of his eyes towards heaven at that time, gave him the idea that he then looked with hope to a speedy reunion with some beloved object already there, or to his deliverance from a stain which nothing could efface on earth. His desperate bravery too, which seemed rather to court death than honour, yet which, on any emergency critical to the service, was exchanged for the cooler courage of sober judgment. All his accounts correspond both with the circumstances and character of the noble Frederick Percy."

This worthy couple retired to rest, determined that they would, in the morning, acknowledge to their guest their suspicions, endeavour to soothe his mind, and

lead him back into the pleasures of social life. But in the morning he was gone; he had left the house before even Matilda had arisen. On the tomb of Selina was found a glove; and in his apartment the following lines, addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Seymour:—



“ You have discovered me. I thought I came armed for all I had to hear; but my weakness has betrayed me. By all the kindness you express for Frederick Percy—by all the generous pity you feel for his misfortunes, though they involved those of friends so dear to you, I implore you, never seek me farther—never mention my existence to any one, except my beloved Dellaville and Anna, and to them only if you think, from their solicitude about my fate, that it would be a gratification to them to form some more distinct idea of it. In this case, tell them that I am not the frantic slave of wild despair, though I feel all in this world

lost and annihilated to me; but my hopes are firmly fixed on a better, and I wait with desire, but not with impatience, my removal to it. The only call which could have renewed my existence here, would have been the power of contributing to Matilda's restoration. That call has not been made. I am dead in every sense of the word, but the breath I draw. My inheritance is Anna's, as fully and as really as if that breath had ceased. Tell her that I have seen her—her husband—her children, though they knew it not.

“From the present state of my mind and sentiments, I feel that my blessing and prayers are not unworthy to be offered up for them, for you both, and for the beloved and holy innocent who has been the chief sufferer in my fate.”

It was without a signature.

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